FIVE FRONTS

ROBERT DUNN

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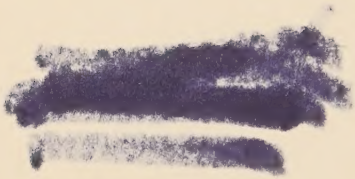

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FIVE FRONTS

On the Firing-Lines with English-French, Austrian, German and Russian Troops

BY

ROBERT DUNN

Author of "The Youngest World," etc.

NEW YORK

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To
ROBERT EMMET MacALARNEY

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FOREWORD

HUNGARIAN is an Asiatic language using Roman letters. So last November in Budapest William G. Shepherd of the United Press and I were puzzled by placards on dead walls headed: HIRDETMÉNY!

"Sounds like some kind of crime," I said. "But what crime?" (To this day I do not know what the word means.)

"Murder, perhaps," said Shep. "They're advertising the finish of 'War Correspondents,' old style."

Maybe the reporter is harder to kill. He is apt to care little for messing with generals, or to pose as a tactician. He knows that one comes closer to the realities of war by mingling afoot with peasantry and troopers, than when convoyed by staff officers and allowed to see only what they permit, to learn what they want him to know. He smiles at the pretensions of "War Correspondents," who ape military dress, soldiers' ways of conduct, and collect decorations. He wonders over the hullabaloo about making dodos of them, since they have existed chiefly in their own or

their newspapers' imaginations. And I ask, have those who mourn the halcyon days of Archibald Forbes ever read him without thinking of Blackstone and the Lucy Books in one?

In this inane war many doors lay open to the various fronts. The reporter needed only personal credentials, initiative, candour, and a sense of locality. I found no military official who did not treat me civilly, in doing his duty as he saw it; and this whether I was his involuntary guest, under arrest, or a mere intruder between the lines. If any of those doors are now shut to me I harbour neither grief nor resentment. Each belligerent demands that you be partisan in what you write from the lines; that you conceal what he wants hidden, tell what he wants told. In the febrile political state of the capitals of Europe this policy of "He who is not for me is against me" is only natural. There you may be told that the whole truth will be welcomed, only to learn later that you have been fooled, and that a non-partisan whose job is to report and write life as he sees it cannot stay persona grata nowadays with any fighting government.

Poor old Mister Truth — Herr, Monsieur, or Gospadeen — who never is belligerent! I know that to prate of one's honesty opens it to suspicion. I cannot and I do not. I want only to plead for that personal sincerity in reporting with-

out which recorded history is worthless; which democracies hold to be one safeguard of civilisation. This war is putting it to the test; reporters, too, are "fighting for life" now. And yet the blindness, the official sophistries which often impeded me, seem in retrospect appealing, sometimes pathetic, in their humanity. One loves far less, judging from what I saw upon certain fronts, the authors of much that is written from such places, and marvels how some of them can sleep at night. And if ever after this war I see a "correspondent" wearing a military decoration! . . .

This book tries to be a detached report of concrete, human scenes in five zones of fighting. I believe that I saw or participated in them in the spirit of a true neutral. But full detachment is a cold-blooded virtue, and it is as barren to act or write with the feelings of a lizard as of a sentimentalist. Moments come in the thick of things when one is carried off his feet, in sympathy, in scorn, in recklessness; which these pages, as fairly immediate transcripts, must reflect. Thus I have excuse to make and apology to offer no more for scoring the Austrians in Servia and reverencing the Lilleois of German France, than for homage to the British at St. Quentin, fellowship with the Russian invaders of Bukowina, or for firing two aimless shots from the Bavarian trenches. I think that in each instance I acted and have writ-

ten naturally, honestly, as a reporter and a human being.

No army nor foreign office in this war recognises as such reporters in the fullest and most serious sense of their aims. Therefore, since being free agents is the prime condition of their existence, they must provide their own standards of right and wrong, follow them at their own risk. Personally I hold it dishonourable to transmit from one enemy to another information of tactical value. But I would not hesitate to break any censorship upon social and political facts, or deeds violating the decencies of war. Personal conduct is to be governed by the orders and permissions of the officers whom you are with, a matter which cares for itself, because no real neutral when he is among men sacrificing their lives — no matter how mistakenly — can fail to feel his heart leap and to bow in admiration for them. Just as they feel no venom against the enemy facing them, it is never they who hamper the reporter. Peace, if it comes before all Europe has made a Mexico of herself (as appears to me she very well may), will have its roots in that sublime brotherhood of all fighters which reigns along every front.

For the rest, reporting is much a trick of observing and interpreting; a problem of selection, like any art. Sometimes a particular scene, or

emotion, or personality, obtrudes as a keynote. Walker, the English bicycle scout at the battle of Le Cateau, was one. Such a being becomes the shaft of light between the inexpressible before your eyes, and the credulous darkness of the reader's mind. I hope that I have conveyed as flesh and blood protagonists equally revealing men like the Bavarian Lieutenant Riegel, Captain Shechin the Russian Hussar, Ivan Tornich the American serb, and the soldier of Przemysl in the death-throes of cholera.

Discretion has place in reporting, but deception none. Luck is far less an element than good after-results may seem to imply. In the flush of success one forgets his planning and hard thinking. Seeing clearly, like facing bullets, is a test of temperament, name it courage or any other quality more or less resounding. And war, for all its horror, may also be beautiful. I hold that the good reporter, like the good soldier, must look upon war as the supreme adventure in the great drama called Life.

Carvel Hall, Annapolis, Maryland,
April 9, 1915.

PART I

WITH THE BRITISH IN FRANCE

I

THE RETREAT FROM MONS

PARIS, August 28, 1914.— For two nights and most of three days the writer has been within the Allies' lines. All of Wednesday morning — the terrible August 26th — I was directly under the German fire. I can thus give the first eye-witness account of British operations on French soil against the principal invading German force.

That, as the world now knows, was the masterful retreat of the Expeditionary Force from the region of Mons, in Belgium, to Noyon, some sixty-five miles inside the French border. Foremost in this unique experience stands the glorious cheer, coolness, and morale of the English troops, under the most desperate conditions that even this untried modern warfare can impose: one to three they fought against Von Kluck's army, inflicting and receiving tremendous losses. In various places of the world I have stood before danger and suffering, but never in the past have I been so on the point of yielding in feeling to them as in these last seventy hours on the white roads and in the stacked wheat fields of the Nord.

Prudence alone for my own safety — and not

from the arms of the Uhlans — made me return. In that forbidden military region, where any foreigner is remarked in peace times, I was becoming altogether too conspicuous. The peasantry were spy-mad, and yet I was only once arrested as a spy, and that by the civil authorities, to whom I proved innocence easily enough. It was the military who were to be feared, and, openly associating with both officers and men along the firing line, the danger of being caught as I was without permits from the staff grew ever more exciting and imminent. But it was rather a shameful luxury to have been for this time without my boots off, without sleep, and with little more than bread and cheese to eat, beside soldiers who had received no rations for three days, and who as they shuffled and dozed along would tell you of regiments 1,200 strong that at roll-call after battle mustered but two officers and 100 men.

Paris newspapers of August 25 declared the northern railways open as far as the village of Aulnoye, some nine miles south of the fortified border city of Maubeuge. In the same way the War Office announced that the Allies' lines in this region had fallen back to the main position north of that city and extending beyond the Belgian frontier near Valenciennes. At the commissariat of police in my Paris arrondissement, I got permission on my "permis de séjour" to leave the

city, and a "sauf-conduit" to and from Aulnoye. These, my passport, and the policy of absolute frankness to all questioners saved me. Had that commissary known the location of Aulnoye, I doubt whether he would have issued me the papers. A crowd was waiting in his office, and I vaguely assented to his vaguer question whether the village was not in the district of the North. But Aulnoye I never saw.

I caught a noon train from the Gare du Nord, in khaki trousers, blue serge coat, golf cap, and the shirt of an American marine. All along the line France wrote the index of her life-struggle. Dusty soldiers in their scarlet bags of trousers and blue frock-like coats with tails buttoned back crowded the station platforms, singing, smoking, filling canvas water buckets for their horses at the platform taps. Boxcar troop trains packed with them and their womenfolk slid along the adjoining track. Every siding was jammed by flatcars loaded with grey artillery pieces, with ammunition wagons; with black, dome-roofed cars bearing the ominous "40 hommes — 8 chevaux." Every station yard was a-litter from hay bales shipped north.

Noyon swarmed with officers in pale blue coats and caps, with silver epaulettes, and a few cuirassiers' brass helmets, from which long hair dangles behind. The uncut wheat lay in the fields flat-

tened from rain, the stacked mildewing; once I saw four old women unloading a rick into a barn. All that luxuriant country in the rich crisis of harvest was empty, rotting. Engines linked together by the half-dozen rushed south, " from Belgium," as the stout, bearded man opposite in the carriage informed. " From Belgium," too, came the box-cars glutted with refugees; at the time he fooled me into believing that. The platform at St. Quentin swarmed with the British, in their flat caps and olive drab, so exactly like our army uniform.

It was getting dark and had been raining. The refugees now rode on open flat-cars, the distracted mothers in black holding umbrellas over the baby carriages. At Bohain my first-class compartment, long empty, filled with eight railway guards, who inspected me in a suspicious silence, and then promptly fell asleep. We were due at Aulnoye at eight o'clock, but it was past that now. The train halted at a town called Le Cateau, fifteen miles south of my destination. A being thrust his head into the window and muttered something rapidly, which woke the guards as if a rifle had gone off. The youngster in the next seat turned to me and said:

" The Germans are all about Maubeuge. The train goes no further."

I stepped out into the darkness of that strange

place, Le Cateau, and into such a spectacle as no man can forget. I knew that then; it hardly would have heightened the feeling to know also that in twelve hours I should see the town ablaze. The guards dissolved into the noisy platform crowd, which carried paste-board bundles, baskets, babies. No one at the gate asked for my ticket or my papers. A half-visible squad of troops on the road passed rapidly, whistling a queer lively tune in unison. It was only when they broke feebly into the Marseillaise that I was sure they were French. And they were marching south.

I made for a light, through an iron gateway in a high brick wall. In the middle of the enclosure a woman outlined in the doorway demanded shrilly who I was and what I wanted. I asked for a hotel, and she directed on up the street, as two dogs broke forth furiously. Outside, French troops were marching so densely that I had to brace and wait against the lightless brick houses of the narrow street, as it curved north, down into the hollow where the heart of Le Cateau lay. Suddenly I caught the impatient panting and the blinding shimmer of blocked automobiles. In them as they followed south were British uniforms, with the meagre scarlet facings of staff officers. Then an immense clatter of hoofs, the jolt of heavy wheels — artillery, sup-

ply wagons, cavalry, the gleam on lances from more motors. It was the British in retreat — *the British!*

The town square was filled with them, already spreading their kits on the stone paving; with horses, motor-cars. It was half an hour after I had inquired at every lighted house for lodging before I found the Hôtel du Mouton Blanc. At a long table in a windowless room behind the café I sat down to dinner with a dozen British officers, and gave those around me the two Paris newspapers printed in English of that morning. They read them with an eager disdain, and their comments first realised to me the grim drama into which I had stumbled, and their wonderful spirit under reverse.

"The Earl of Leven wounded, eh?" said the young lieutenant of a Dorsetshire regiment on my right; "is that all they have?" (Leven's was for days the only casualty made public.) "We're rather well cut up, too. Five officers and 240 men alive out of a thousand in that business around Vicq."

It was the first bald chapter of the decimations that for the next two days officers and men repeated to me, and always thus, as if they were but remembering from a book of statistics; with never a quiver of the voice or eye; not as if they might betray down-heartedness or sorrow, but ac-

tually as if such things, in their sublime assurance, were inconceivable. That saying as old as history, that the Englishman never knows when he is beaten, may have appealed to me before as a figure of speech. In a flash I read its literalness.

A comrade of the lieutenant's came in. The pair had not met since the battle began three days before, and they named over in the same matter-of-fact way brother officers — dead.

"I say," the newcomer leaned over toward me, "how is that cheese there?"

They asked me no questions, but I was quite frank with them, even gave the Dorsetshire officer, whose name was Burnand, my card. I told the same story that I repeated afterwards to whomever accosted me: that I was an American correspondent, who, having applied in proper form, with the required sworn declaration, to accompany the French army, had come north to look at the country where fighting might occur, and been caught by the British withdrawal.

"Well, if I were you," said the cavalry captain across the table, significantly, "I'd get out of here the first thing in the morning."

"Why?" I demanded. "Are you going to arrest me?"

He simply stared through me and said:

"The Germans aren't five miles north of this

bally place now. They'll be shelling it before six o'clock."

In the passage-way a baby was crying with relentless piteousness. The mother, in a huge black picture hat, did her best at soothing, but the shrieks got on Burnand's mind — so he said, at least.

"Oh, choke that youngster," he kept muttering. "I'm nervous as a cat. I think I'd jump if I heard a door slam."

Nervous! After the carnage he had survived, the mess-mates he had seen slaughtered, he drawled this. He was no more nervous than any Englishman of his caste is after a cricket game. I never used to believe in caste; but, if it made that young fellow what he was then, I do.

"To-morrow the row'll be over toward Cambrai, too," said the moustached captain. (Cambrai was a larger town ten miles west-northwest). "They burnt Vertain and Solesmes, just above here, this afternoon."

Here and in the café outside, though always refraining from asking directly, I gathered details of the fighting retreat lasting since Monday. Crowded before, the square was a spectacle which only Meissonier could have portrayed. The khaki swarm had tripled, massed around the blaze and crackle of camp fires alone lighting the scene. Unsaddled cavalry horses, automobiles piled with

sleepers, infantry hacking open tinned beef, cavalrymen lying down to doze in their long coats, jammed the last inch of space. Opposite, in the ranked windows of the "École des jeunes filles," the staff headquarters, showed the pale blue of mantle gas jets shining all night upon the wounded.

But it was inside the Mouton Blanc that the heroisms and ignominies of war best came into their own. Men of a Welsh regiment, finding I could speak English, crowded about in the exact, pitiful ignorance that Zola insists upon. "Where are we?" they asked. "In France or Belgium?" Le Cateau tongue-tied them, and each produced a little blank-book and made me write the name for him. "There," laughed one of them. "So if they pick me up after the Germans get me, the old lady'll know where it happened." It seemed as if I never stopped giving out cigarettes, lighting them; they had no money, and had not been paid since coming to France. "France"— as a red-haired sergeant said —"a blooming fine country, if the people weren't so oncivilised."

The attack of Sunday was drawn, and the present force, probably the British centre, had retired from around Mons to the vicinity of Vicq, over the border from Valenciennes. On Monday the cavalry were to attack the German artillery, supported by a French column from the east. The enemy, in far greater numbers, had sur-

rounded themselves with barbed wire, and the French failed to show up. It was here that the slaughter was so severe. The infantry, finding it useless to join in, had begun the retirement south on Monday afternoon, the rest at daylight to-day (August 25). All had been on the march ever since, with the Germans close to their heels, and burning every village on the roads.

"Brought down two of their planes this morning, just the same. You ever seen them? Got wings like eagles."

"Remember that shrapnel, right over our heads."

"It was the rain this afternoon saved us."

"Of course, they're mowing us down — 90,000-odd against 24,000." (This moderate estimate likely only included the opposed wings.) "But we're getting more of them. Why, the blighters can't shoot a rifle. All our fellows' wounds are from shrapnel exploding overhead. And they squeal like pigs at bayonets. Can't stand the steel, y' know."

"We're drawing them down into France like a bait, where the Frenchies can fight them on their own ground. The English is on the defensive," explained the red sergeant. "Then the French are to close in on them from both sides, catch them like rats in a trap."

All at once a little corporal at my elbow, who

had been eying me in silence, said, "They've just arrested a spy across the street."

"Have they?" I asked, without a quiver, I think, but with a quick burning in my chest. "And what was he doing?"

"Hanging too close around headquarters. One of our men spotted him, and they led him away — blindfolded. You know what that means."

I had not yet been to the police with my papers as I should have done. But now I talked a while longer, and at the first pause leisurely left the café, and picked a way through the prone, weary bodies to the office seen in my first round of the square. The official mannikin there simply shrugged his shoulders at the red seal on my passport, and stamped the sauf-conduit with certainly the last impression his little machine has given.

At midnight the two women who ran the White Sheep started to shoo the throng out. It took them half an hour, and it was not until the last private had gone and the door was closed — and the baby and the picture hat abed upstairs — that I realised the pluck of that pair. It is through them, as much as from the blind, contemptuous self-confidence of Tommy Atkins, that Le Cateau becomes unforgettable. One was young and rosy-cheeked, but the other and head of the house, a

sallow, thin being, with lined cheeks and a pointed jaw, began to relate to me how many hundred meals she had served that day, how in her bad health the village doctor had warned her that she must have rest and sleep, though she would be up at four in the morning, making coffee.[1]

I wonder — I doubt — if she is alive now.

"Hein!" she summed up the evening, with the national nod and gesture of both hands to her hips, at all the litter and wreckage on the floor, "C'est la guerre."

In that, and the next few moments, she epitomised the French just as much as Burnand or any of the rest had summed the Briton. When she had helped me lift two of the leather wall benches into the centre of the café, and thrown on them a great striped mattress for my bed, I asked whether she would flee south in the morning.

"Go? Go away from Le Cateau — from my village — from the Mouton Blanc? Why should I go? The German pigs will not touch me," she averred with a sublime calm, though her beady eyes flashed. "Come, we will have a bottle of champagne. I have been keeping it for years."

And from somewhere the red-cheeked girl produced that bulging big bottle and three slim

[1] British officers seen later in Paris told me that these women were German spies.

glasses. It had no label, but was of some good old vintage, though a bit sweet, and we filled and refilled with the hissing stuff, drinking: "Vive la France!" and gossiping about les beaux Anglais, and her son who was with the army to the east, until quite two o'clock.

II

THE BATTLE OF LE CATEAU-CAMBRAI

THE thing that toward four o'clock stirred me from the doze I was just falling into strikes the keynote, I think, better than anything else in those vivid three days, of this epochal war. There was no reveille, no sound of a bugle; only, echoing through the silence and ashen light of that square, the cry:

"Doctor! Doctor! Doctor!" And again, and repeated, "*Doctor!*"

Over in the girls' school some one — lord or Manchester apprentice — was in his throes. As morning broke I slipped out alone into the square, now nearly empty. The last of the infantry were trailing off westward through the town; the cavalry and artillery up the street I had descended in the night. I followed them.

All along to the railroad station on the hill, which was deserted and locked, the folk of Le Cateau stood in knots upon the curb. Not at their doorsteps, mind, which is the place for gossip, but speechless, drawn-faced, loaded with cloth bundles linked to throw upon their shoulders, turning heads from their homes toward a flight

they knew not where. I took up a position on top of the hill, where for an hour the pathetic stream grew and swept southeast toward La Groise, while southward on the St. Quentin road, after the artillery and cavalry, and on the route I had resolved to take, trudged an endless stream of peasants' wagons.

Sunlight began to glance across the rolling fields, yellow with stacked wheat sheaves, through the delicate bosks of willows. Toward six o'clock, suddenly boomed out the heavy staccato of artillery, as yet invisible. Then along the brow of the opposite ridge to the north, not a mile away, appeared long lines of racing heads — cavalry from their undulating motion, the Uhlans, though the summit hid their horses. *Puck-puck. . . . Puck-puck-puck,* broke out bullets from machine guns on all the roofs around.

I sat on a stone at the entrance of an inn-yard. The increasing fire, too high yet by thirty feet to hurt, neither quickened the speed of the procession passing under the railway bridge nor made a single face turn. Behind the inn, a two-horse 'bus which had long been waiting empty, filled with the stout proprietor, his wife in black baize carrying a thrush in a wooden cage, and their three bare-legged boys. They trundled away. All at once not a vehicle or refugee was in sight; and then, up the empty street, came the last of

them, a woman. She could not have been less than eighty years old, and was all alone. Clad in her best black, without goods of any sort, she wore a quaint poke bonnet, riding in a small two-wheeled rick. Brave, stolid, tearless, perched on her high nest of clean straw, she croaked the cry, that of every driver who had passed, to her stumbling, skinny pony: "Vi! Vi! Vi!"— and vanished.

Of those who quitted it all, I think that I was the last to leave Le Cateau. As the clatter of bullets descended, I edged along this upper road, the bottle of spring water I had taken from the White Sheep in my hand, toward a brick factory with a grotesque tin windshield on its chimney. Suddenly across the valley, and behind where the German cavalry still were passing, appeared a mass of English artillery, and the sight of them sweeping down the slope, swinging to park themselves behind the cover of a grove, was stirring in its perfectness. A bullet — a wild shot — pricked up the dust not ten feet from my stand, and I slipped behind the factory, just as the machine-gun rattle broke out upon its splintering windows.

The shrapnel, too, was growing louder and closer. In modern battles, of course, with the front extending fifteen miles or more — perhaps of only one wing — you cannot pick the site of

butchery, especially when only afoot. An old man in a blue jumper came out of a shed, and started dumbly with me down the fields to the now vacant Bohain-St. Quentin road, where the cavalry had passed, and in the direction of the Germans. There was a bridge and stream there, making back toward a mill under the railway embankment, and the fellow headed toward this, as I sat waiting in a ditch for fully half an hour.

Nearby lay a horse, his legs horizontally not touching the ground, as always in the first moments of death. The parked artillery should have been but a rod away, but I could not find them. Only the German shells, passing lower overhead with their peculiar, steely elastic whiffling — like loud invisible ghosts — sent me off again. The peasants along the road, aroused later than the people of the town, were just beginning to emerge from behind their hedges. In about a mile I caught up with an old couple. The man was lame and hobbled on a white stick, his wife carried nothing but a little basket, and when I tried to take it from her, to help her along, she resisted me.

" C'est épouvantable," I said.

" Non, non," she muttered. " J'ai de la douleur — douleur."

Grief — that strange French word. How

much it always means, but on her thin lips its force was — universal.

Soon a drab line of bicycle scouts came along, but heading back toward Le Cateau. I told them of the cavalry up on the slope. "Yes," said their freckled leader, "it's a circling movement, to the east around the town." As they wheeled on, the last in line stared with his eyes fixed on the bottle of water, and I heard him mutter to the man ahead something which sounded like "spy." Then came the trundling ammunition wagons, and on the last of them, sprawled on his back, all his limbs bobbing nervelessly, with blanched face and open mouth, lay a youngster wounded. Next cavalry. One fellow with a small moustache beckoned me, for a drink, I thought, but when I offered him the bottle, he shoved it almost angrily aside, and I gave him the cigarette he wanted, for he had seen me smoking.

Two young women, each wheeling a baby carriage, passed.

"Look at those blighters," said the trooper, feelingly. "It's them that's getting it worse than any of us boys. Our business, this. But them — it's they we should collect the account from Kaiser Bill for. Hello, there's one of our 'planes."

A biplane, a Voisin, by its shorter under wing,

was clattering up from the south. A motorcycle, with a big scout buried to his ears in a greenish raincoat, zizzed past toward Le Cateau. Pausing, he shouted something, and the squad of cavalry turned and sprang up a lane to the right. Beyond more stood up there. A little village close down the slope swarmed with them, waiting on both sides of the road. But when the first horseman was close, for what reason I cannot now explain, I threw the glass bottle into the ditch. Did they think I was offering them poison, or that the thing was some signal for the watching enemy?

Just beyond the houses, appeared the elusive artillery. In crossing from fields on the left to the right side of the road at furious speed, a box of biscuits from a supply wagon jolted out and smashed, scattering its contents. A square-faced young peasant with the bloom of outdoors, in brown corduroy trousers, who had been dogging me, asked rough questions in his patois, threw off his coat and filled it with the grub, which he proffered. Over the biscuits we reached an understanding, and I consented to hint who I was.

"An American," I said, as we trudged on.

"Maroc?" he stared. "Maroccan?" (Moroccan.)

I could not make him comprehend. It was indeed to wonder, among the many misdoubts of

republicanism you get in France, on the quality of popular schooling.

On top of the rise, one looked back two miles, clear to the roofs of Le Cateau showing above its hollow, and dominated by the great Roman dome of the town church. The motor-scout in the raincoat shot past, returning; stopped under an elm tree. When I approached him, he recognised having passed me back on the road, and I volunteered the true and consistent reason for my presence. He was a huge, placid being with curly sorrel hair. The coat hid his rank or rating, and at first he answered nothing except to point back at Le Cateau, and say:

"Look at her burn. Already."

Dense clouds of smoke rose to the left of the church. Further north (that direction) the winking flashes of artillery, the scattering detonations, with their potent, killing sound, showed the enemy's position.

"Do they fire all these towns with shrapnel?" I asked.

"No. Generally with petrol, when they're inside."

A bearded peasant in a black shirt and suspenders ran past toward the conflagration, toward home and family, surely, crying in falsetto, "Le Cateau incends!" The boy in corduroy laughed at him in a foolish way. The scout

looked hungrily across the road, where he was eating biscuits, and remarked that he had had no breakfast. I fetched him a couple, and for awhile we sat under a wheat-cock munching in silence. Down in the hollow the great mass of cavalry were beginning some manœuvre at a gallop.

"Wait," said the scout, rising. "You'll see something." And he went on to explain how the force in sight was preparing to take the offensive against the turning movement of the Germans to the east, which the cyclists had spoken of. Toward that quarter the land sloped upward. One mass of the cavalry, under cover of the artillery, who were to open fire as soon as the former rushed the approaching enemy's position, from the concealment of the rise, ranged themselves in the open. To the right and close at hand, the supporting cavalry gathered behind a dense grove, hidden and ready to swing out and overpower.

"They're wizards, these Germans," said the scout, "at masking their artillery."

Till well past noon we waited for this conflict. But the hours went like lightning. The shell fire around the town waxed furious. Pale flashes pricked themselves out yonder, like a long fuse lighting intermittently at dozens of points. Over the drifting haze from the invisible guns, the bursting shrapnel showed itself in shapes of tiny, woolly-white clouds spawning in the clear sky,

expanding magically. Though the wind was strongly toward them, the thundering, the ugly menace, was deafening, desolating. Sometimes smoke hid the church dome. Powder gleams broke out between us and it. A few shells burst directly over the hamlet where the cavalry had been, not a quarter-mile away.

"They're getting our range," said my friend. "We better get out of this."

But we no more than crossed the road to the foolish cover of a larger tree. The scout, who had left his motorcycle against the wheat-sheaves, sauntered back for it, remarking, "That was silly of me." Peasants from the next village south, Busigny, grouped around us, and he idly warned them away. A beautiful, dark-faced girl, with raven hair, approached him, and said with a deliberate winningness — French of the French that she was in those thrilling moments:

"Monsieur, vous n'avez pas peur?"

Flirting on the battlefield! Who but a Française?

The man seemed not to hear her. The youth in corduroy was gazing with his tongue out. A grey touring car with three officers, two English and a French cuirassier, which had flown past before, halted and they got out, pointing and opening their maps. As the scout joined them, I discreetly backed off twenty yards, not to be seen lis-

tening to the talk. The Englishman, a stout, sallow man with the ratings of a major, was the ranking officer; the other was grizzle-haired and very thin; the Frenchman, with the brass ridge down the back of his helmet like those you see on ancient coins, and horse hair hanging to the middle of his back — in scarlet trousers and azure coat — looked comic-opera-like, an impertinence. And plainly he was a supernumerary, bobbing about unheeded, in the conference which, from the Englishmen's gestures, showed the strategy going to their satisfaction. It must have been an hour before they tooled away, and in that time, to my chagrin, the artillery fire seemed to relax; though all at once close to, in the woods to the left, but aiming away from us, broke out a second focus of flashing thunder.

"Our guns," said the scout, as I returned to him. "We're driving them."

The cavalry below were breaking positions, galloping in all directions. More appeared on the ridge south of where the enemy had been expected. On our opposite side, long lines of troops — infantry — marched south on a hidden road. Another motor-scout, even younger, red-faced and lithe, with a tiny black moustache, dashed up for a moment, and as he left turned to me, demanding briskly, "I say, by the way, what are *you* doing here?" But he rode off before I could answer,

bidding so-long to my first friend, calling him by name, "Walker."

Again we were alone on the bank under the barbed wire fence, except for the peasants. It was covered with red clover, and all at once I found a four-leaved specimen and gave it to "Mr. Walker," who stuck it in his cap with a vague smile. The boy in corduroys began to gag and point into the sky over the marching infantry, where the rattle of cylinders had again broken forth.

"German 'plane, by —!" exclaimed the scout. "Look at her turned-back wings."

By the angle in each 'plane, the resemblance to an eagle, or a buzzard, was uncanny. It was steering straight for us, some 500 metres high, but before the breathless instant when it hung straight overhead and then banked away eastward, the infantry massed on the other road gave it a crackling defiance with their rifles.

"Our men over there, then," said Walker, cranking his cycle. "I was wondering who they were," he drawled, and without a word of parting whisked away down the rear slope.

The cavalry, too, were withdrawing. I saw my chance of seeing any carnage vanish. There was nothing to do but retreat also, in company with the ejaculatory peasant, and join the baby carriage procession forming from all the houses in the vil-

lage of Busigny. At last the boy left me — turned abruptly with a curt adieu and his coatful of English crackers into the high hedge of the first brick farm — pondering over Walker's manner at his job.

Plainly it was he who had been responsible for the operations at this small point of the terrible fight on that August 26. Yet not once had he shown the smallest worry, the least tension. He had never raised his voice, more than smiled inscrutably. Often in levelling his glasses he had seemed exasperatingly slow, not to say stupid, in distinguishing lines of trees from troops, and so forth. His calm was exasperating; he did not even seem alert; half a dozen times I had called attention to distant movements, at which he would say, first taking a bite of biscuit, "Ah, yes. I must look at that," and languidly level his binoculars. I bethought myself of an American on such a job — his tiptoe, braced concentration. But could I swear to any gain in efficiency by that?

III

ST. QUENTIN AND THE AFTERMATH

BUSIGNY poured forth its placid, terrorised mothers and old men. All seemed too poor for travelling in vehicles. I found myself behind a couple, on one side their little girl hugging a tiger kitty in her cape, on the other a tow-haired boy of twelve with a great pair of boots clasped on his arms. Out of a courtyard swung a dog-cart, drawn by two brindle hounds, its load covered with a pink tablecloth. It was too heavy for the poor dogs, unwieldy for the woman and child, who guided it from behind. For quite a kilometre I helped them, shoving from the gutter as the beasts ran amuck in their haste, urging on the panting dogs when they lay down exhausted. And then, after we struck a slope, I watched them rumble off — the peasant's big splay feet furiously trudging in her shapeless shoes, shoulders swinging in her black waist which yet had a touch of elegance in its cut.

Enraging — the word was not enough, with that ruthless booming and those bloody hearts so close behind. But branding savagery with venom is quite useless. It was useless, too, trying to

soften the tragedy by remembering that the forebears of these folk, for the 500 years from Philip II to Napoleon, had endured just such terror and eviction. The home is the home, gunpowder and the sword its curse, whether to white lord, French peasant, or Hottentot.

I stopped in a dingy café for a glass of home-brewed beer, sitting at the table by an old man with one tooth in his withered jaws. He had seven grandsons at the front, he told me. He was a weaver "de tissu," he explained, "all for the American trade;" this with a craftsman's twirl of his fingers, when I had claimed my nationality. He had seen the Prussians forty-four years ago march down this same road. No; he was not going — he had nowhere to go.

The rumble of heavier firing brought me outside. Twice I started back up the Le Cateau road, twice returned. This new outburst was farther west, toward Cambrai, where it now seems that the Gordon Highlanders were being so cruelly slaughtered even then. My police papers only allowed a return to Paris on that day; the British were getting to know me too well. To be discovered back-trailing in this guarded, forbidden region might be fatal. My case, if I were taken, might hang on the personality and mood of the first officer faced, and at this time of such terrible losses, in this march on which the fate of France and Eng-

land, at least, depended, indulgence was the last thing to expect.

Anyhow, I could not have reached that focus of fighting before dark. I headed south for Bohain, covering the last four of the ten miles on foot from Le Cateau, utterly ignorant of the surprise in wait for me there.

Bohain is — or was? — a smaller town than Le Cateau, but with wider streets. I made for the railway station, which was barred as usual; got bread, cheese, and red wine in the buffet hotel, and asked a train guard in a red cap where I could charter a wagon to drive to St. Quentin. This was impossible, he said, in the glut of refugees; nor could I hire a bicycle, though one might be bought. He took me opposite the mairie to a store full of wheels, but I thought their prices too stiff. I wanted to tell the woman in the blue waist who sold them that she might as well give me one, as to-morrow the Germans would be with her; but so certain and gloomy a prophecy might arouse suspicion. Vain care. As a fact, what happened was likely a piece of spite on the red-cap's part, he having some tie with the woman.

I left him outside the shop, and was headed for the Hôtel du Nord on a last try for a wagon, when a shout went up behind me, and a hand fell on my shoulder.

From doorways, alleys, side-streets, crowds scurried across the cobbles, as though I were a dog-fight. "Espion! Espion! (spy)," went up cries from the dense, menacing mob, of which instantly I was the centre. The fingers that gripped me belonged to a Teuton-looking creature with a pointed blonde beard. A hollow feeling crept under my ribs, but I had sense enough not to shake him off, and to brace my wits.

"Wohin gehen Sie?" demanded he, letting go.

"To St. Quentin," I answered, in French.

"But that is not the road to St. Quentin which we find you taking," said, in English, a short, sallow man in a felt hat. Score one for them. All around the notes of anger became derisive. I started to explain in English about the Hôtel du Nord and a carriage; but the first fellow cut in, roughly:

"Sprechen Sie Deutsch?"

"Je ne comprends pas," I said, "parlez Anglais."

Score two. "Ah!" exclaimed the pointed beard, triumphantly.

"You answer him, you understand, when he asks you in German where you are going," explained the other. "Then you say you cannot speak German."

"Look here," I said, with a good English cuss-

word. "Do you think I'm a spy — *espion?*"

"Si!" shouted the crowd. "Si!" And my captors nodded.

Then all gave gangway to a dumpy, bald little man, with eye-glasses on a gold chain, who plainly, from his interceding, worried air, had been listening on the fringes.

"Monsieur le maire," indicated the felt hat, and they all fell jabbering among themselves. Blonde beard repeated the damning evidence of his verbal ruse, but I saw at once that in the mayor, gesticulating and declaring that I was English, lay a partisan.

"I'm an American," I corrected him, whipping out my passport. "Who are these two — detectives?"

"Detectives of the police," said the sallow one.

"Then let's go to the police station," I said, "so you can see all my papers."

We started, ploughing through the eddying, noisy crowd. I beguiled the felt hat with the same true, plausible story told to the British. On the mayor's desk, just inside the grey stone building, I spread out every paper and card I had — even my Navy pass used at Vera Cruz. The police papers he studied under a stubby finger, muttering, holding his glasses half way between them and his eyes; he even massaged the red seal on the passport, nodding with proper official unction, and

laid a friendly paw on my coat. By the time the sallow man had translated each English sentence, the day was won, and the mayor got busy with the municipal stamper to allow me to enter St. Quentin. Only the creature so proud of his dialectics remained sullen, kept going over his case, as more to explain than accuse. But I had had to prove that my knowledge of German was limited to "*Kenn nicht,*" and "*Liebst du.*"

Pocketing my papers, I was only shy of the throng still around; and that most as a matter of injured pride. Out went the felt hat and shouted to them, and when he came back for me, and we crossed to the same bicycle store, all were hanging idly on the corners, gazing unconvinced but appeased. I felt my cue was to quit the place as fast as possible, and since by wheel was the only way, I blew myself to the dearest one in the blue lady's stock. The sallow man helped pump up the tires, and as we shook hands out in the street leading toward St. Quentin, I reflected how no man like me, American or not, would have stood any show if he knew German, and thanked my stars that it was the civil, not the military, authority into whose hands I had fallen. They were easy.

It was sixteen miles to St. Quentin. But I had not gone two before I ran into friend Walker, the motor-scout, leaning his machine against a stone water trough. Already having confided in him

my apprehensions, how the lines had closed about me, I remarked, "Well, I got pinched after all," and he answered my laugh with his usual unbetraying smile.

"Been running down this way," he said, rather thickly, "to see if I could be of any use. It's — it's been a bad day, I'm afraid."

"To the westward — Cambrai?"

"Yes. But we can't tell much yet."

A double motor-cycle, bearing a set-faced woman nurse in white, shot up the road thither. A stout girl panted up to us, and began to ask Walker's advice whether or not she should quit her home. Behind, the noise of battle was flagging.

"Tell, her," said he to me, as I interpreted, "that it's safer to leave it for a couple of days. Then go back."

And always, like the Cheshire cat, he disappeared abruptly.

The girl called the Germans "Les Prussiens" — as all the peasants did.

I pedalled on south and soon caught up with a young civilian in spectacles, who looked like a student. He had been making a sort of century run on his wheel through surrounding towns, and the war seemed remote as America to him. We entered St. Quentin together, I leaving him in its wooded Champs Elysées, to seek out the police

station and forestall suspicion by getting my papers stamped for the trip to Paris. Surely here the railroad was still running.

But nothing was more astounding than the change that came over that quiet old city in the next hours. A place of some 50,000 people, equidistant with Rheims and Amiens from Paris, its twelfth-century church is "starred" in Baedeker, together with the exquisite pointed arches of the mediæval Hôtel de Ville, where the police commissariat was. The prefect there viséd me without question. A few English officers were shooting about in grey motors, but for the rest the place was normal. Trolleys were running, and the only railroad station, where in trying to check my bicycle, I lost a train just leaving, two hours late, was jammed with refugees. At the foot of the hill, across the canal, I got a regular dinner in the Hôtel Métropole. Crowded it was, of course, so I had to hire the proprietor's windowless sitting-room, with a piano and queer draperies, to lie down for a wink on the sofa until the 11:30 train left.

I was wakened by two officers, one French and one English, bursting into the room, and starting to spread blankets on the floor. The first hardly noticed me, but the second stared so, that I remarked sleepily that I was an American. "Yes," answered he, curtly, "I can see that." What he

may have had in mind I never knew. A knowledge of my trespass, in the turmoil reigning without, might have just been barely overlooked.

The hotel, the square, were in an uproar. It was Le Cateau over again, amid a population five times its size. Groaning motor-buses, the thud of artillery and ammunition wagons, the clatter of cavalry, of lancers — all except infantry — the shouts of officers, some carrying maps in their hands, filled the clear night. You could not force through the surging crowd of citizens outside the station. Suddenly as I waited there, arose the shout, "Gangway for the wounded!"

Down the hill was coming a long line of huge motors, each roofed with canvas, and bearing on both sides a great red cross. For more than an hour a double stream of them halted at both entrances to the station, disgorging the wounded. Some could walk, their heads already swathed in white; all struggled to. Most were carried, their arms around the necks of two comrades, who linked hands under them. A few were open-mouthed and very pale, many asleep or unconscious. The crowds stared, awed and breathless, until an exclamation of pity burst out from some woman loaded with her baby or the household goods.

No train that night for any but the dying. (None at all in the morning.) Back in the café of

the Métropole, filling with exhausted officers, the tables were all askew and some chairs overturned. The pink-cheeked young wife of the proprietor was serving cheese and coffee in tall glasses to whoever wanted them, free. Spoken to, she answered incomprehensively, and hurried behind her counter. A bronzed cavalry captain, thirstily sipping his coffee, was telling a brother officer with a dust-stained face, how in one place the ground had been so ploughed with shells that he could not pick a way among them.

"We're beaten, all along," he said. "Done — that's what we are."

And when a Briton admits that —! But it was only the reflex groan of an instant.

"Forty thousand French, y' know, ought to have attacked from the west at eleven this morning," he went on. "Had forty miles to march, and didn't come up till too late. Not much left of the Ninth Lancers, they say."

"Fighting four days now without a rest," reviewed another. "Well, the Germans boasted they'd be in Paris in eight from the frontier, and it isn't half way to here. We'll stand them off yet. This drawing scheme, to fight in the Frenchmen's own country, is bound to win."

"Hear the French got at them after dark," recovered the first speaker, "mashed them like flies." And wholly braced from his moment of

despair, he had the generosity to add, "They're making a wonderful advance, these Germans."

"Of fifty-eight men with me, I mustered five at six o'clock."

"Infantry scattered all over the country, looking for companies that have been wiped out."

"It's — it's staggering."

And a third officer went on to tell how he had shot a German officer behind a tree, on refusing to surrender. Wounded, two peasants had helped him off to the German lines. "They'll get blamed for it, of course, and killed if the fellow dies. These poor people — it's they, not us, who suffer in the end most."

That calm indomitable spirit of the English — beaten yet unaware of it; decimated, but still confidently holding ground and pitying for respite. Clear-headed, resolute, facing the issue cheerfully, not self-deceived! Frankly, I felt a kind of anger. Twice, perhaps, at critical moments the French had failed them, but of reproach, even of criticism, in all those three days, I heard not one word. In this great drawing movement, the English, who do not know how to run, had been given the ever-desperate rôle of the defensive. In Paris I had heard, unbelievingly, of a *quid pro quo,* demanded and conceded by the French, as the price of British intervention. Could this strategy be in part the discount levied? No! Yet but one thing was

sure — the undying loyalty and brave resolution of those English, the noble English. One's life is worth less than such a concrete vision of humankind.

The café was filling with refugees. All night no one got a wink of sleep. Already the hotel force had disappeared, and I did not again see the great moustachios of the proprietor. The brunt of everything fell on his scared, bustling wife. All night she served coffee to arriving, wilted fighters. Some lay trying to doze on the padded leather benches, but the plaintive chatter of mothers — the billiard table with a mattress on it was a veritable crèche — was less distracting in volume than in its subdued tragicness. All night the crash of wagons, the snort of motors, the champ of hoofs, echoed on the cobbles without.

Before daylight most of the officers had gone. I waited around as long as I dared, resolved, however, at least to give the appearance of sticking to the Paris road. In a barber shop next door I killed time by getting a shave and a shampoo. There, everywhere, the word had passed that the city would be shelled that morning, and the Uhlans in possession by night. But the sight which was the reward of all lay across the Somme canal, in the Place du Huit Octobre, by the monument to the defence of the town against the Germans in 1870.

Here was the working heart of the Expeditionary Force in full blast. A modern army, vividly on the job. Red-capped staff officers arrived and dashed away, to report, to give orders, clattering on great bay horses, surging in motors. Changing incessantly in person, grey-haired generals, colonels, aides — some with gold eye-glasses, all elegant — with armfuls of fluttering maps, shouted quiet commands to forces making off on the radiating streets in all directions toward the country. Long lines of artillery, of ammunition, supply wagons, endless cavalry, seemed to march and counter-march up and down that hill, around those sharp corners, for upwards of two hours. And always the commissary 'buses, that still blazoned on their sides in huge letters the commerce of London, mingled with the army of civilian motors, carts, carriages, in streaming flight, among the dumbfounded population that had no means to escape.

I rode up the hill to the police, to get permission to leave town by bicycle instead of train. The prefect was talking excitedly under his gothic arches, and waved me away with a hand before I could open my passport. Coasting down, a motor-cyclist buzzed past, mouth open in his unseeing, ashen face. Bandaged troopers, their horses killed, limped along the sidewalks like men walking in their sleep. Whenever a motor-lorry

paused, its driver promptly fell into a doze; all the extra men on the artillery and supply wagons slept through the jolting over pavements. Highlanders, grimed with soil, stockings around their ankles, tartans gone, halted and scraped along their weary, blistered feet. War — this indeed was war in all its stupefying desperation.

At nine o'clock I took the Paris road, first leading almost straight west from St. Quentin to the village of Ham, fifteen miles beyond. As it happened, that was the whole front of this section of the English force, and I rode completely along it, ranged for battle. Just out of town the infantry was breaking camp, and the carcasses of their beef ration lay everywhere in the road. To right and left of it, deployed cavalry or artillery, making for the cover of groves or swells in the flattish, fertile country. And always the surging back and forth of lightning motors, of motor-scouts — though I never again met Walker; the lumbering of London 'buses, only one of which I saw wrecked on its side. But in places bread and biscuits, fragments of army documents, were mashed and ground into the macadam where there had been a spill. Between all, the refugees afoot, on wheels, the trundling baby-carriage army, picked a hesitating way, I clinging closely to them for concealment whenever the markings of an officer were visible.

" I cawn't find those two ration carts," drawled one to another, as if he had no more than lost his hat. " Men dead and well out of the game, I fancy."

I gave cigarettes to four infantrymen, just when they were deciding that their company had been wiped out. They had been looking for and failed to find it since dawn. " Better report at 'Am — ain't that the place we've orders for? — to the G division." It was a lowering day, beginning to rain, and I stopped for bread and cheese in a village drinking place, midway to Ham. Here were to be heard the same stories as at Le Cateau after the Mons fight; of the pathetic, generous hospitality given by the French peasants; of the awful decimations, always mentioned as though no more than the score of a football game; of the Germans' poor rifle aim, their flinching at bayonets, efficient and hidden artillery, their prodigal advancing in massed formation — eight deep usually — and overpowering by sheer force of numbers; the assurance of their greater losses; also the revolting charges.

But in that café, even from those privates, I got the same uneasy glances, heard the same whispers after I had answered their questions. One fellow, who had remarked heartily: " It's good to hear your own language in a furreign country," abruptly grew silent at my story. Still, I thanked

fortune that it was the English I had fallen in with and not the French. Their officers were too preoccupied in a strange country even to notice fully an obvious alien; with the latter it would have been different, and I should probably have long ago been brought to book. In the narrow streets of Ham, jammed with supply trucks, I finally turned south, for the twenty miles to Noyon. For the first time, spaces of that long road were free from the freight and humanity of battle. Toward noon, the artillery detonations broke out behind, but they continued weak compared with the thunder of yesterday, and it seems now that I missed no real battle yesterday (Thursday, the 27). Hills appeared to the left, well fit for a defending army, and in that direction was La Fére, strongly fortified; to the west heights rose out of the deepening valley of the Oise. I rode through deserted towns. In one large village not a soul but two old women was to be seen.

A rod outside Noyon was a glut of troops and transports. In the middle of the road, surrounded by staff officers, and more French than I had yet seen, was an elderly general. I should have known him as Sir John French, even if the cavalryman by whom I was riding had not just mentioned that to his companion. He seemed a bit stouter than his pictures, but in the glimpse I had, as I

warily carried my bike through a sugar-beet patch, around that headquarters in the field, he was smiling, unworn, unruffled, to an elderly ally in pale blue.

In Noyon the police commissariat was closed. I sought a café and drank a grenadine, after finding that a train would leave at five o'clock. But soon a reflection and an incident sent me forward, on the thirty-mile run to Compiègne. The town was too full of French staff officers. I was paying my bill, just as a line of wagons started back in clattering retreat through the steep town. In the great forest of Compiègne, I was at last outside the lines, though still in the military area, and for the first time breathed freely. After those scenes of war, a great loneliness filled me in that vacant, man-sapped region. I stopped at a woodcutter's hut and drank cider. The man had colourless hair, was probably consumptive; his wife was working with nimble fingers, binding bristles into a white celluloid hairbrush. Fighting to them was as far away as Asia. Only outside Compiègne, toward five, I met a French private awheel, with rifle over his shoulder, who said he had been riding since last night from Namur. He asked me into an inn for dinner, but I wisely said I was not hungry.

In Compiègne, I got a bath and dinner at the Hôtel de la Cloche, which was alive with Red

Cross nurses. The night train for Paris, bringing in wounded to their steaming soup-kettles on the platform, was hours late. But on it were two English sergeants, in charge of the supply trains from the British base at Havre. Usually they went there by Amiens, but now the French had blown up the railroad. And the Uhlans were in St. Quentin — of course. I should have been, had I not been arrested, and bought that $38 wheel.

We rode in a freight car, filled with young French volunteers under age, who never ceased to sing in their enthusiasm:

> C'est Guillaum-e, c'est Guillaum-e,
> C'est Guillaume que nous combattrons —
> Ah-h-h! . . . O-Ou!

I reached the Gare du Nord at two o'clock this morning.

IV

THE TURNING TIDE — BATTLE OF THE MARNE

PARIS, September 16, 1914.— Penetrating the Allies' lines during the recent and pivotal battle of the Marne proved a far harder and less successful venture than mingling with the British forces in the desperate days of the battle of Cambrai. Again chance threw me among them rather than the French, to find their spirit in victory at the staff headquarters in Coulommiers no less calm and generous than it had been in the tragic retreat upon St. Quentin.

I failed to reach the firing-line; yet travelled that section furthest within France which the Germans have swept, where, in villages burned by their cavalry, towns looted, the meaning of war to the stoic French peasant was written enragingly large. This time arrest came from the military rather than the civil authorities — that arrest which seems to be the normal state of reporters who would follow this war into the forbidden " zone of the armies "; and I have just returned from a five-day sentence, whose quaintness only the ingenious Latin mind could have designed.

For reporters to write of themselves heretofore

has been in bad taste and vain; but in this conflict which seems to mark their end on the battlefield, some note of their dilemmas, if only for a touch of relieving comedy, can be justified. "The story of this war can't be written for two or three years," said a captain of Cameron Highlanders to me in his mess in the Hôtel Porcépic, Coulommiers; adding grimly, "And then no one who could write it may be alive."

For example, in order for us to reach the "front" last Wednesday (September 9) at the height of the Marne battle, a ruse was imperative. No trains were running eastward; a motor-car was necessary, for which you must have permission from the police to leave the city, stating your destination. Of course, none would be given for the desired direction, or for any point, without a serious excuse. We decided on a doctor's certificate, which finally was furnished by a sly-eyed old medico with a taste for the drama of intrigue (Heaven help his ilk with our County Medical Society!) in the southern purlieus of Paris.

I suffered from angina pectoris, and with a nurse and doctor must go to a southern climate. Nice was stated; and when the next morning we passed out of the Vincennes Gate, among trenches, barricades, prone trees with all their branches whittled sharp — our chauffeur held under a thumb on his steering-wheel the yellow police pass

granting a fairway, but to the south. The plan was to ride thither as far as Melun, which a stray French bicycle scout on the boulevards had said the Allies had evacuated on Saturday; then, hiding our maps under the seats, turn north and east towards La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, with the story that the military had checked our route, or we had lost our way, if any of the red-trousered sentries at every bridge or railway crossing disputed us.

At first the plan worked perfectly. Barred from entering the forest of Vincennes, we passed through Corbeil, which, because of its great flour mills, had been a German objective; then Melun, which showed no sign either of desertion or of occupation by the enemy. At last, taking a straight road northeast between tall flanking poplars, across the fenceless, deserted landscape of lucerne and buckwheat, we struck the path of the sword.

In the car we were abolishing militarism, conceiving a post-bellum millennium of working-folk and paupered money-lenders, when one of us exclaimed, pointing—"German shell!" Two round holes pierced the high garden wall of a house in that fleeting village; and not till when well past did we realise that on neither curb nor doorstep was to be seen a single human being. Then down a hill, by the green circus tents of hangars, with a Blériot roosting in a wheatfield, we entered burned Courteçan.

A dead bay horse by the roadside, his legs unnaturally elevated; the stifling tang of burnt hay, met us. Of that hamlet little stood except high-gabled walls of grey stone, around the charred wreck of homes. The Uhlans had fired even the barns, to destroy the crops and fodder, of folk whom nothing but a geographic line, the millstone of history, and a military caste separated them from as brothers. Gleams of flame still showed in the feathery embers. A crowd of peasant women — not a man among them — surrounded and stopped our car.

They wore men's broad-brimmed straw hats, and their eyes were red from lack of sleep and weeping. Hardly one could have been under sixty. They kept their hands moving furtively under their worn cotton aprons, and talked all together in pitiful ejaculations, as though having lost the power of coherent speech. They described the grey horsemen galloping to their doors, rifling and firing within, dragging them outside, slaughtering their cattle, passing on, that Lord's day, in the smoke and flame.

They kept reverting to this inhumanity: A son of the village, about twenty years old, had been led into a field with hands tied, and shot.

"Why?" we demanded.

"He had nineteen years," one answered. "He must soon be in the army. They would not want

that." It was not hard to tell which peasant was his mother. Behind the group a poor creature sobbed continually.

Where were the other young men, the girls especially? "They will return," we were told, "with the children. Things are better now." Here was the last chaper of the story that I had seen in the Nord, at Le Cateau and Busigny. Here, too, trudging behind little carts, the children carrying their pets, the parents with their all jammed into pillow-slips, had taken place that same exodus. They would return, yes, but to what, what ecstatic a salvation! An old man across the road was hammering at the iron tire of a wagon-wheel. His house and barn and horse were burned, but he still had the vehicle. And as we sped on toward the larger town of Rozoy, fires set around dead horses, dozens of which lay along the ditches as if struck down by pestilence, were burning, tended by old men in all the fields. But of the human graves there was no sign.

At Rozoy began the touch of comedy that was to relieve the horrors of our coming sentence. One must remember that in this unspeakable war on France, fought as if in a well-groomed park, in a land and by peoples which still wear badges of mediævalism amazing to Americans, the grim and the grotesque are sure to mingle. We were sit-

ting at déjeuner in an inn, when there entered first a bronzed British captain with a small moustache, then a red-capped staff-officer, a Sir Someone Cunningham, it soon seemed. Next, the doorway filled magnificently with a civilian. His white goatee and moustache *à la mousquetaire* at once conjured Louis Napoleon. Yet he was English — of the English. With a finger on his eyeglasses, he glared at us, to announce:

"I am the *Times* correspondent, and will be shot at sunrise. But as for that frog-faced blighter —" he shook a finger at the captain, who grinned back deliciously "— death cannot settle my score with you." He sank into a chair, dramatically quoting, "Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung," and demanded white wine with his luncheon.

There followed him the *Daily Mail*, in the person of a slim, whimsical young man who smelt of brilliantine; and the *Mirror*, as a fresh faced ex-artillery officer with a gift for telling stories in the Lancashire dialect. Their automobile commandeered, arrested the night before for emerging from behind a haystack and answering in English the bad French of some staff officers of the Second Army who had lost their way, they had since been white elephants on the hands of the captain, who, because general headquarters

was now moving from Melun to Coulommiers, was endeavouring to get them there in a hired machine.

We made friends. The two officers, with the tact of all military men who have no specific orders about you, refrained from questioning us. But the prisoners foretold our gloomy fate if "caught"; while Sir Cunningham, complaining that yesterday's cannonading had made him deaf, listened with a hand behind one ear, and the look of a cat that has swallowed a canary. We talked of Eastern wars, of political crises in Teheran, Vienna. There was not a statesman in the world whose most intimate friend Mr. *Times* commissioner had not been; not a "war correspondent" in the days when they existed whom he had not followed to the grave; not a general in the French army who had not entertained him at dinner. And at moments he would lapse into the mutter —"Parliament shall hear of this. A question will be asked next Monday. Yes, we are travelling in a Black Maria, or, by the French idiom, a 'salad basket.'"

Thus, until there breezed in a jaunty being whose simple aspect completely stole his fire; a pink young lieutenant of Scotch Horse, Baron Russell, by name, of the Intelligence Department, an exact replica in dress, even to the eyeglass, of a certain Scotch comedian. He began by airily

telling us of four chums of his who had all been killed along the Marne that morning, and when we exchanged cards and left town unchallenged in our car, declared that when I saw him after the war at his club in Piccadilly he would have the Victoria Cross. Positively no doubt about it.

All this, understand, I detail with a purpose, quite aware of how on the edge of the most wanton carnage in history it may sound trivial. But if telling the truth about war will end it, it must be the complete truth; and here and to come was the spirit of the English winning, on the rebound from their martyrdom at St. Quentin, as I have written. That afternoon we tried by devious roads to reach La Ferté, being finally stopped by an endless French supply train headed there, to pass which meant sure arrest. So we headed north, and ran into the first British outpost on a side road near La Haute Maison, five miles from the firing line. The usual lorries and London motor-'buses lined the way, and the Irish sergeant, who sent for the lieutenant who "advised" us to retreat to Crécy, declared he had been born in Boston. I had remarked it in the Nord, how the eyes of Mr. Atkins always brightened, and he often informed you that he was going to New York "after the war is over," when shown an American passport. But coincidence began to grow uncanny. Two bicycle scouts hove to, one who averred he had been raised

in Portland, Oregon, and the other in Ohio.

Yet Crécy received us without suspicion. We sent the car back to Paris, one of our trio still in it, while Reed and I resolved to try our luck on foot in the morning. It was not the Crécy of Edward III, but one Tommy of an ammunition train camped in front of the mairie made a remark that should be as memorable as Edward's message to the Black Prince. In the crowd of them that surrounded us, offering a hidden berth in a lorrie for the front at daylight — detailing the incessant tale of German brutalities, of a German cavalry force cut off and surrounded in a wood by the Marne, where they had blown up a bridge before the whole column had passed it — one Atkins, calling to another, summed his history of the war with:

"And the Rooshians'll be in Berlin next week."

"Berlin? 'Ow can they?" retorted a corporal. "I tell you they 'aven't crossed the Pyrenees yet."

"Well, if they've got it as smooth as we 'ave now," put in a third, "that won't stop them. Better than a 20-guinea Cook's tour, this war is for our fellers here."

A French woman in black, however, with a hat of the boulevards, who stopped to inquire of us where the absent mayor was, did not share their opinion of the town. She had come out to see a son at the front, been assured of his safety, and

wanted Paris again, quickly, train or no train.

"This place — this place," she raised her shoulders. "Life does not exist here. Even in time of peace it is 400 kilometres from anywhere. Even the Prussians have not bothered to pass it through." True enough; perhaps it was she who had scared the mayor away. At any rate, he had fled, and he seemed to be in general demand that evening. But our estimate of his courage was rather replaced by respect for other attainments, as implied by his next caller. A youth with stooping shoulders could not be denied him. In a house across the bridge over the Grand Morin, an addition to the population of Crécy was imminent. Who ever said that there is no hope for France?

In his Honour's absence, the sauf-conduit we wanted to the front, then near Pierre-levée, had to be secured from the Police Commissariat — a civil document, strictly valueless, as we knew, within the lines, though it might work with French sentries. And it was no fault of that personage, the good Monsieur Chargot, that we did not get there. Never, except in musical comedy, have I met his like, from the medals and gilt and silver braid that covered his chest and limbs to the dramatic fervour with which he scanned our papers, slapped us each on the back, and stamped the documents we needed in his office. He must see us to our hotel. We must guess his age. We had to admire how

strong he was, feel his arms, which were pipe-stems; hear the gaunt hero of '70 boast, " I am the strongest man in France; I am her champion athlete at fencing, the golf, yes, and the football."

You see, the marauders had withdrawn; children were being born; every wind was favourable.

At dinner in the inn, as a crew of Tommies entertained their officers at the piano with the " Marseillaise " and " God Save the King," not a devious word or look was directed at us. A tall lieutenant observed, " If you want to catch a Uhlan, they're so hungry, just go into the woods north of here and hold out a biscuit."

It wasn't until three English newspaper photographers reached Crécy well after dark that the luck shifted. Two reporters M. Chargot might abide, but three more than that roused in him all the spy-madness of the French peasant. He clamoured into the dining-room for Reed and me to vouch for and identify the intruders. Naturally we could not. " They look like Germans," declared the commissary. And out in the courtyard, where they were dining by a single candle under a magnolia, their spectacled, sallow faces bore him out. Moreover, a certain Captain Greave, of the supply train, who had been jolly enough at dinner, stole out into the dark garden to get a line on them. They talked " at " him with most convinc-

ing, tactless arguments on the idle persecution of reporters, which only ended by the Captain's lumping us all five together, and his threat that we had better make ourselves scarce in the morning or take consequences. The clear implication was that he would notify the staff about us.

All night the tortuous cobbles of Crécy clattered under horsemen and lorries. In a lull toward dawn an officer pounded on the hotel door, and after a dialogue in execrable French with some sleepy lady, aroused officers in the room below us. "Complete defeat!" he shouted up to their window dramatically in the ashen stillness. That, we learned after breakfast, was of the force surrounded in the wood that we had heard of, where 1,500 prisoners and 12 guns were taken. And the British van had crossed the Marne at five o'clock that morning.

We consulted. Afoot, it would be impossible to catch the front; indeed, in this war, one's only way to see fighting is to have retreating lines close around you, as had happened at Le Cateau. We flipped a coin; heads for Pierre-levée, tails for Coulommiers, to take the bull by the horns, state our case and wishes frankly to the staff, and chance their indulgence. Tails fell twice, and we climbed into the motor of the two lieutenants who had been so friendly at dinner, and burned the twelve

odoriferous kilometres — battlefield details unnecessary — toward the headquarters town, which gives its name to a superior brand of cheese, and the Grand Morin bisects with arched bridges, old balconied houses and weeping willows.

V

COMEDY AT THE BRITISH HEADQUARTERS

THE Prussians had been there, looting but not burning. Every unshuttered door and window was smashed, chalked with the invariable legend — why was a mystery —"Eintritt verboten." Khakied Tommies, bare-kneed Scotsmen boiling hams over campfires, lordlings dozing in huge grey cars, motorcycles cutting corners, "Red Caps" (staff officers) gesticulating at French interpreters with the costumes and paunches of chorusmen, swarmed in the streets, in the square between the Municipal Theatre and the Hôtel de Ville. As we sought the Provost Marshal in the latter, there loomed up Louis Napoleon (he of the *Times*), at the instant of oracularly confiding to some titled major —"Yes, I had a rawther high opinion of the Kaiser, until lately."

The Provost Marshal rejoiced in the name of Bunbury, an old colonel with a kindly, indefinite eye and very long cheeks where the bones protruded in their exact centre. He seemed to expect us, waved aside any verbal plea with the request that we explain our purposes and presence in writing at once. I commandeered a typewriter

in the back of his office, and wrote on a jury-box sort of bench, for the room had been the court of the justice of the peace. Immediately he put us under parole.

"Are we arrested?" we asked.

"Oh, no," grinned he. "But you must give me your word not to leave Coulommiers." Our denial that we had ever seen an official statement barring reporters from the lines mildly piqued him.

"What'll we get?" we asked. "Two years in a French fortress?" That had been the expected verdict of our confrères at Rozoy.

"Perhaps." And he referred us upstairs, in that chilly pile, wired with the rubber conduits of a field electric-lighting kit, to a Major Kirke, of the Intelligence Department. After another hour's wait, we found him more sympathetic and no less confiding — a fellow with a blue eye and small red moustache.

"We have sent to Paris to settle your case," said he. "In the meantime, you have permission to draw rations to-day — and to-morrow, probably."

At any rate, life for twenty-four hours in Coulommiers still lay before us. Arrested? Oh, dear no! And since, I have found nothing to regret in that time. Strange as it may sound, we had not the least resentment against our hosts, while

they, once the machine of discipline was cranked, all treated us with that friendly, casual candour in which the Briton of caste is natural master. How could one grudge freedom to talk and wander at will in the heart and flower of the British army, winning now, on the offensive — not crushed, decimated but still blindly valiant, as I had seen it in the valley of the Oise?

A time, indeed, of extraordinary revelations. Whole divisions might be enfiladed, but that seemed nothing to the tragedy that nowhere in Coulommiers could a fellow get four o'clock tea. Tommy, whom we gathered had a special fleet of lorries to supply him with the leaf, was inclined to worry more about them than the range of shrapnel. Monocles over khaki; "I say, Sir Lionel," and, "Oh, Westminster," were thick in that square and City Hall. A private party — no other word fits — who resembled a white hope in a skirt, was tacking a label on a box: "To be called for by Lord Locke." But the amazing thing was the lack of formality between men and officers, of the chill and cringing in what one imagines is discipline. It existed, rigid, and efficient, else the pervading air of smoothness could not have been. Officers consulted their men casually in giving orders, and the men would accost them with no more than a dab of the hand at a cap. Visible discipline is sometimes held to be mild in

our American navy; but these Lords and cockneys saving Europe — perhaps all liberty — were just one cheerful, hard-working family, making the best of their job, far more informally than our fleet does at target-practice. Social caste there may be in England, but England in the field is without the first taint of militarism. You see at the top notch, sweeping all else aside, the race's genius for administration that has made its great history.

And from Tommy in the cafés, sighing for cigarettes which the enemy had swept clean away; from MacGregor, chucking biscuits to girls washing clothes in the river and giggling at his naked knees — you could not get one word of venom against the Teuton. "The blarsted simpleton," said one, of a prisoner he had taken, "just lay on his back in the motor, playing a mouth-organ, 'appy as a king."

"Expect their rifles to 'it us?" said another, who produced a kitten which he had carried all the way from Belgium tucked in his coat. "'Ow can they, when they fire 'em from down by their knees — just like that?"

Always I kept eyes peeled for curly sorrel hair, for Walker, my bike scout of the Le Cateau battle. And once from the Grand Morin bridge I sighted him, scooting around a corner, but out of

hail. Yet, alive still! If plain cats have nine lives, Cheshires have ninety.

The blithe Baron Russell — he of the certain V. C.— took me inspecting his mounts, and on the way rather scotched one's faith in half the tales you hear of brutalities. One story told here and at Crécy, by men and officers alike, always consistent in detail, even to names and places, concerned a bicycle scout. Of three captured by Uhlans, two escaped and hid in a barn. They saw their comrade shot twice, bayonetted in the face, his body, while still alive, soaked with gasolene from the machine, and both thrown into a haystack which had been set afire. Yes, Russell had heard that; he was in the Intelligence Department, to which the bike scouts belonged, and he had investigated, thoroughly, to this effect: Not one motor-scout was missing, and none of the names mentioned had ever belonged to the squad!

"But I mustn't tell you all this, or be seen talking to you. If they think you're a spy, what'll they'll think of me, eh?" and he screwed in his eyeglass. "Silly work mine. Translating prisoners' letters all day. What do you think? Why, each mother's son of them says, 'By the time you get this, we'll be in Paris.' . . . Hello. Look at them. Firing squad."

We were back in the square. Four men shoul-

dering rifles were leading off down the street two young soldiers with heads forward. They stumbled, shuffled, but not an eye in the throngs seemed aware of them. I was glad, as they vanished over the bridge, that I had not seen their faces.

"What for?" I asked.

"Looting. Two this morning, too, and for rape. But we were speaking of spies. You said you were at Cateau? Well, we never catch 'em in time. They hang around headquarters. Remember the church there? One was flying carrier pigeons from the dome of it after we left, giving away our position."

At night it was the same in the Hôtel Porcépic; whither peasants with eggs and veal from the country were daring to return; whither cavalry captains from the front, scouts who had not eaten for two days, dropped in for food, sleep, and the wine of the country, served by the fair Alice. Tales of strategy, carnage, heroism, in all the long fight from Mons — to date maybe the most heroic in history — you had for the asking; but not one that carried a syllable of drama, of fervour, of hate or pity, in those quiet islanders' voices. It may sound impossible; it may not seem human, in the abhorred name of this war as a distant world views it — but it is the truth. It does justice to the professional soldier, in defence of the world.

We were told our fate in the morning. At

turning-in the night before, "Louis" of the *Times* had drawn me mysteriously aside. Whether it was the white wine, or because our captors on their receipt for his commandeered car had cut 200 sovereigns from his valuation, he had whispered: "I have it direct through General Smith-Dorrien"— or words to such effect —"whom I brought up from a boy, in Egypt. Don't — don't tell the youngsters." (He meant the whimsical *Daily Mail* man, and the ex-soldier of the *Mirror*.) He gave me his wife's address in England. "You, as Americans," he ended, feelingly, "may fare better. But already, as organiser of the *Times* forces in this war, I have been criticised on the floor of the House. *We shall get three years in the Cherche-Midi.*"

It turned out to be not quite so bad as that; only exile to the south. In the morning, rumour first had it that a two-horse rig was at our disposal, in which we were to start on a gipsy tour, telling fortunes and weaving baskets as far as the republic of Andorra. But toward noon, Colonel Bunbury of the cheek-bones turned us over to the National Gendarmerie. A sallow army lieutenant with a hooked nose who received us found pleasure in executing a pantomime of guillotining at our expense. Inside the brigade building the commandant, in riding breeches — he was too fat even to have sat a farm Percheron — made out for each

of us a *dossier*, which stated among other things: "He is not dangerous, . . . will proceed from brigade to brigade as far as Tours, where he will be released."

"How many of your brigade stations," we asked, "are there between here and Tours?"

With a chuckle the fellow held up fifteen fingers. "It will take you about a week," he said, and proceeded, with the pose of a pen-and-ink artist, to enliven each dossier in turn with a description of his victim. They lose piquancy in translation, especially "Louis's" *moustache mousquetaire;* the *Daily Mail* man's, which was *naissante* and his nose *cavé;* also Reed's *front placide,* and my *menton proéminent.* Can you beat it all?

A train of German wounded and prisoners, which steamed into the railroad station in a cloud of iodoform, started us south, chaperoned by two gendarmes, that afternoon; and our last glimpse of Coulommiers, in the heart of the cheese country, was a perfect symbol of the Briton in France: a Highlander with a loaf of bread like a baseball bat under his arm on the vain search for a tea-room. The prisoners, with a "pantalon rouge" and bayonet at the door of each horse van, we were not allowed to talk to; but their queer grey uniforms, square Teuton heads, month's beards, and the cowed resignation of their dull blue eyes were eloquent enough.

As a fact, before reaching Tours, we reported at but three brigades. In Gretz that night, which we reached on the straw and manure of a cattle car, we were greeted in the deserted streets by the shout, " Marie, des fous! " from two girls behind a hedge. From a filthy inn under the walls of Baron Rothschild's château, our next sentries took us to Champigny in that noble's luggage truck — a veritable salad basket in the eyes of all the countryside, and of the French soldiers at each barricade along the road. The Champigny gentlemen, using us as an excuse to see the sights of Paris, just relieved from its desperate resignation, took us straight to the capital; and we had the thrill of dashing through the gates of the Invalides in two taxis, to the joy of an officer from our cruiser *Tennessee*, who knew me too well, and was strolling by.

An official of the military government of the capital parolled us to take the train to Tours next day. He remarked that the cathedral there is a masterpiece of the Renaissance. We found it quite so.

PART II

WITH THE AUSTRIANS IN GALICIA

I

INTO THE CARPATHIANS

Neu Sandec, Galicia (Austrian Poland), October 18.— The Imperial Austrian colours are yellow and black, and I wear a brassard of them, exactly like a Princeton hat-band, around my left arm. This, at least, is something in such a press-forbidden war; and it is a bit more, perhaps, to be the only English-speaking person with the Austrian Army yet arrayed so, and have the promise of seeing on the firing-line what is the matter with the famous Russian " steam-roller " of which one read so much last month in Paris. It seems stuck the other side of nearby, unpronounceable Przemysl.

To attain this in Vienna was a matter of carrying letters from one official " hochwohlgeboren " to another. Incidentally, in that city no one was eating animals from the zoo, one heller bought just as much beer as ever, the Café Sacher was crowded, and the white-jacketed man from San Francisco behind the Savoy bar produced hot tamales at midnight, as a matter of course.

And, quite sincerely, the writer has never found the polite professions of foreign military men

more quickly substantiated, generously and unconditionally, than by the said hoch-et-ceteras. "You will have no expenses whatever while with the army," declared the final oracle in the Georgkochplatz, "except to open champagne when we win our victories."

Perhaps there is a nigger in the woodpile lying low for pen sympathy in all this. I hope not. In the end, it would only make the truth more easy and diverting to write. Probably I am over-suspicious, from having lingered too long in Paris.

This town at present is the Austrian army headquarters. To have been, as I now have, at the respective bases of two armies in the field — and enemies, at that — should offer active contrasts; but the fact is, the heel of war stamps Noyon or Coulommiers among the warm vineyards of France, and these cold cabbage fields bordering the Russian plain with much the same human images.

Yonder in those great sandstone barracks — like new city apartment houses — is the royal Karl Franz, who succeeded the Sarajevo "martyr"; also the executive head of the dual empire's forces, General von Hötzendorff. But you do not see them, as with the English at Coulommiers, mingling with troopers and populace; you do not hear the Hapsburg Archduke Frederick, also here, the commander-in-chief, greeted, "Sagen Sie,

Fred," by fellow officers with the same casualness as the British Duke there enjoyed. But Tommy, in kilt and khaki, at a tourist saunter in France, or boiling beef over a campfire on the cobbles, had the same detached, unworried air as has his cousin Otto all in baggy blue-grey, with a high-fronted little round cap, as he strolls the Ulica Krakovska here, or in the outlying fields ladles soup from his wheeled kitchen.

Both countries found army and populace racially alien to one another; in each the incurious tolerance of the people towards their saviour from invasion has been amazing. Trade goes on in the "rynek" (marketplace), crowded with little straw-filled peasants' carts; long-coated Jews, with the two orthodox curls before their ears, gesticulate and haggle with a mother fitting a new cap on her sturdy youngster from the hills, as avidly as though no Cossack could ever wreck their stock. A priest with a pompom on his square-cornered hat clatters past in the seediest of barouches, and down on the filthy cobbles, with a mediæval fervour quite in keeping with modern war, kneel before him all the shawled Christian women in sight. Perhaps between them thunders some huge war-coloured motor-lorrie filled with bread or ammunition — trucks which claim in huge letters a brewery in Budapest, just as in France they advertised some English soap. And each moment grey

motor-cars, with a thin lateral girder rigged overhead to raise wire entanglements at night, chug and plunge through streets far too narrow and winding for them; only here the British flat caps and khaki of officers are replaced by blue-grey flannel, but with gold, scarlet, or orange splashes on the collars, and already stoles of fur. You miss only the motor-cycle scouts of this petrol war. Polish roads are as bad as our own.

To get here was a railroad journey of forty-eight hours, made in six in times of peace, with sleep impossible and food elusive. But in the stations were the same steaming cauldrons of Red Cross soup as in France, presided over by young women also no less conscious of their costumes than of their responsibilities. But not their favour for the ever-suspected foreigner; and I still carry the blight of two dawn breakfasts in the unutterably filthy inns of places like Dsiedsitz and Zywiec.

At last, across the Silesian border, the Carpathians rose southward, snow from the last three days' fall still whitening the high pine clearings. Northward, thirty miles to the Russian border, lay a rolling, Appalachian-like land of larch, and birch golden with autumn. Instead of fence, there were hedges of clipped spruce; log houses chinked with moss and clay; barefooted women

gathering their crops of cabbages in the freezing muck of fields.

At each station, hordes of refugees, now that the Russians are in retreat, crowded on and off the pottering train, returning to their homes. The shawled heads, bundles, the polyglot tongues and headlong, bewildered pace matched exactly those of our immigrant crowds landing at the Battery. It made one feel at home; far more so than in homogeneous, self-sufficient France. Here were the ingredients of our own melting-pot, all as unaware of so likely a destiny as we are of the problems they will bring us after the war.

Especially at night in northern Austria, you felt the spell of the war-god. In our peace-proud eyes, we have thought voluntary enlistments impossible in nations like this of conscripts and military duty. Yet, apparently, the under-aged and the over throughout even this factional country are flocking without coercion to the colours. There is even a Polish Legion, moved, of course, by hate of the persecuting Slav. In the darkness you saw on the hats of youths running up and down the platforms the glittering gilt and silver, like Christmas-tree tinsel, with which every volunteer in Austria decks himself before receiving his uniform and orders. Bohemians, Mora-

vians in red waistcoats and brass buttons, they raced about shouting with that peculiar vigour of the German or Germanized peasantry, which it would be the arch calamity of this world war to see crushed utterly; and each as he ran sang snatches of some haunting, plaintive battle-song.

In the jammed second class carriage I shared seats with two young infantry officers from Vienna, who up to now had done only a year's service, and also were bound for the front.

"You ought to see the fierce spirit of my men," said the one with the big nose, who had lived a year in England. "And they come from all over Austria-Hungary." He spoke with a real fervour, but insisted, too, that he was not a "professional soldier," which, perhaps, accounted for his belligerency, after I had hinted a doubt of the genuineness of a common patriotism in this land.

Only hinted, because in this war, where the truth lies so deep, behind so many veils of prejudice and press-agenting that one begins to despair of its existence, direct questions are generally foolish, and may be dangerous. Had I asked why Hungarians and Austrians were quarrelling in the field (as one reads in France), they would have laughed with the same scorn that I, having up to now read English newspapers, have been tempted to voice at the cock-sure statements of

their press that India and Egypt are mutinous against England.

The lieutenant's companion kept taking off his hat and running a hand through his close-cropped, whitish hair. He was the true bullet-headed Teuton, with extraordinary high, wide cheek-bones and a tooth-brush moustache. He was very concerned that the rules of active service had so robbed him of his locks, and told me with the simple sentiment of his race how his "liebe"— best girl, supposedly — had clipped him when he left her that very morning.

"We take these ignorant peasants," said the other, defending universal military duty, "and in a year of discipline have made men out of animals — taught ignorant louts how to read and write."

I didn't remind him that the sabre was not necessary for this, and that less money than a standing army absorbs, spent on State schools, would turn out even more polished gentlemen than the Austrian private. Fact is, the writer has always believed in compulsory service, but not on the grounds that Europe urges for it and that are so abhorrent to us. This war must present us with the problem of defence against the predatory commercialism really at the bottom of it.

"We are not selfish in this war, we are not

fighting to enrich ourselves," went on this young man, "but only to assure the peace and prosperity of our future generations. . . . Yet it is a trade war, not a national or dynastic war, least of all a popular war. England seems to think she should rule the world because she can beat us at making haberdashery."

A clever fellow. One must always bow to sincere idealism, which it never pays to argue with. His nose acquitted him. But I wonder how he will fight.

We tried to sleep, our feet sprawling against one another's stomachs, heads on the knapsacks covered in cowhide with the hair on. Once the youngster of the "liebe" woke with a start, and answered the other's query of what ailed him — "I was wondering," said he, "whether this won't be my last railroad journey." And I ask, what man of a race other than this terrible, brutal Teutonic one, could have had the guileless sentimentalism to think, or thinking, speak so, on his way to the firing-line?

The lights started to go out; but the roystering crowd of civilians all about us waxed noisier, as they began to munch cold goose and sausages, to pass about black bottles and tiny schnapp glasses. One Pole, rather the worse for these, had a long time been glaring darkly at me over his fierce moustachios. He demanded aggressively

what language I was speaking. It took some time for my clever friend to appease and convince him that Americans also used the tongue of the perfidious English. His friends had agreed, he told us, that we were talking Swedish. Whereupon we all shared their queer drinks, mixing plum brandy and kümmel in the little glasses.

In the morning, stepping out into this town, it was as if the seat of war had been transported on a magic carpet to the region of Hester Street, New York. It is only a large village, with the sewage flowing through the middle of some streets, as in Mexico; but the buildings that closely line the main Ulica Krakovska, in their heavily lintelled windows and rococo cornices, are our East Side to a T. In a café I got breakfast from a returned emigrant who had been a waiter in Max Schwartz's Café Liberty, on Houston Street, and claimed the friendship of W. T. Jerome and Judge Kernochan. Back there, the veal and poultry on the way to be killed "kosher" is driven in cooped wagons; here, as I ate, I watched peasant women on the way to rynek hugging live geese under their cloaks, till one ran amuck with a splendiferous dragoon, in scarlet trousers, dragging sword, and golden frogs on his astrachan coat. Next, an old fellow in his stinking yellow sheep-skins driving a pig with a string tied to his hind leg down the local Grand Street, defi-

antly, perhaps. Last, the ominous clatter of hoofs, and here passes a company of Hussars returning from the battlefield, the men mud-smeared from their ashen faces to the yellow facings of their coats (red-facings for the few Hungarians among them), the horses pitifully thin, many riderless, and with festering sores on their backs.

But my pilgrimage from the hochwohlgeboren to hoch-ditto was not yet ended. Now in one office, where a pair of skis leaned in a corner, I was handed the aforesaid brassard from the drawer of a field kit. Outside another, an aged beggar sat moaning and beseeching on a heap of crushed stone. Twice, to maintain the mediæval flavour, I was asked what my religion was. And finally landed, after a five-mile drive in an enormous sea-going hack, through seas of mud punctuated with gay roadside madonnas on stucco pedestals, to the mess of K. u. K. Kriegpressequartier Feldpostamt No. 39, in the " casino " of a poultry-ridden, unsanitary inn, where one's fellow-guests include at least one Hungarian journalist who used to be a trick bicycle rider — yes, at Hammerstein's, New York — and every one clicks his heels together and bows to the colonel before sitting down to eat. And by afternoon I had had my chest jabbed with hypodermic and received five hundred million dead cholera

germs as a prophylactic, for there are some fourteen cases here.

Since, in the process of adapting one's self, you have as a neutral to reply tactfully to such withering questions as, "And what do you think of England *now* for plunging the world into this war?" To accept such eye-openers as the solemn statement (by a Hungarian) that all which is decent and worthy in the Russian comes through his Asiatic Tartar blood.

One tries hard to understand. For instance, yesterday we were all to be taken to see a spy shot. He was a Ruthenian priest of the Greek Church. Ruthenians are Slavs, and their peasantry scattered through the country are prone to help the invaders. It was to be a show execution, to teach a moral lesson, but at the last moment was called off. The culprit's conviction was changed to lèse-majesté, and he was pardoned.

The easy-going, generous refinement of the average Austrian is world-famous. At Vienna, in official quarters not to be mentioned, I was urged to "give these people a square deal, because they haven't had it yet." Well, there is the wife of a captain here, who, ever since the war began, has been trying to follow him to the front. Twice or thrice she has been sent back. She haunts the café of my East Side waiter, collects officers about her, pours out her yearnings and her troubles.

They admit that she is a nuisance, that she has no business here; but they listen and sympathise with her by the hour. To my suggestion, with Lord Kitchener's warning to the English army in mind, that she be arrested, the answer is made, "Impossible, impossible, to treat a woman so. We are powerless." Again. Driving home the other evening, three young Polish girls in a roadside farm ran out shouting and hailing our carriage. To my amazement, we stopped, and an officer got out to attend to them. They ran back giggling to the house: it was only a girl's impertinent fooling. But with the ideas one has been given of the Germans' treatment of peasantry, my heart was for a moment in my mouth. The officer chased and caught one of the girls. It was rather dark — but I think I saw him kiss her.

So in this war, no matter which army one is with, it is hard for a neutral not to feel in sympathy with the side that he is on. Necessarily then, you are too far from its exiguous councils, from those single, inevitable brutalities of nation-wide firing-lines that loom so large as the horrors, truths, and deceptions of a neutral press — to be sophisticated by partisanship. One is confined to Neu Sandec, where it is impossible to buy a towel, and a shop that sells soap sticks out a sign to tell you.

Sometimes we go camping in the Carpathian

foothills. There last Sunday we ran into a band of ten-year-olds, playing Cossack and Austrian, fighting a Buffalo Bill battle. They had wooden rifles, tiny knapsacks covered with cow-skin. All over Europe, I suppose, instead of tops or marbles, or whatever the seasonal games are, from Antivari to Dundee, the rising generation is playing at war.

When it grows up, how will these days influence its outlook upon life and the future? Those youngsters may then be the only men alive in their various fatherlands.

II

THE CHOLERA TRAIL TO PRZEMYSL

PRZEMYSL, October 25–November 3.— Last evening while we skidded down the hill toward the River San, the flashes of Russian artillery fire twelve miles to the eastward pulsed through the night-mist like reddish heat lightning. Yet then, as we passed the sentries of the outer and the inner fortifications, where nothing was visible except great redoubts of sod and masses of wire entanglements, and received the "Feldruf" (password), you could hear no detonations; nor any throughout the night in this long-beleaguered Austrian stronghold. But certainly a battle was on. In the streets our headlights struck the blinking eyelids of endless files of grey infantry, trudging afield under their hairy knapsacks; and toward midnight in the Café Stieber it was whispered that again the Russians were attempting to surround the city.

To this place from the Austrian staff headquarters, as the crow flies, it is scarcely sixty miles, but by motor-cars and rail it took us three days and nights. As to mud and landscape, you might have been touring the Piedmont region of Vir-

ginia. The single-track railroad was blocked with returning hospital trains, trains of wounded, of Russian prisoners, Red Cross trains going forward; each with no less than two engines and two dozen cars. Remember, that for all one reads of France and Belgium, this eastern war theatre is by far the greater both in length of firing line and numbers engaged. The line extends from the Baltic Sea to Rumania, now that the German and Austrian armies are joined. Here three nations with some 6,000,000 men in arms face one another in unending battle.

But a nearer marvel lies in the contrast, both human and military, between the war here and the war in the west; and in that difference there is a resemblance of significance for Americans. Yesterday as we pushed our car over the high divide between two forks of the San, no veteran of our War of the Secession could have stood among those yellowing birches and believed his eyes. Arms bandaged in slings, limping, bracing themselves with sticks, the wounded slipped and tottered down the hills — afoot, mind you, in muddy grey uniforms and high-fronted caps, almost the exact colour and design of the South's. It was 1864, not 1914. It was as if the years between had profited mankind nothing, the world had not moved since then.

I have cited the likeness of a British to an

Austrian headquarters; but outside such a place you meet here the grim, labourious opposite to the swift gasolene war in France. Into the Neu Sandec railroad station, as we left it, rolled a train of wounded, of bearded creatures crowding the wide doors of luggage vans, staring from their swathings with the meek daze of the discarded conscript. The hind car was a passenger carriage. Two men in gloves, clad from head to foot in white rubber, stood on the platform. A stretcher was waiting outside the last compartment. Two soldiers were lugging a limp body from it, by the head and heels, as one does a dead man. He sank upon the canvas without a sound nor the tensing of one muscle. He was middle-aged, thinly bearded, his nose had once been broken, and his cheeks had a queer greenish pallor. A Red Cross man pushed through the hushed throng, his arms forward, unfolding a big square of paper. He slapped it upon the carriage with the same perfunctory deftness that a theatrical advance agent shows a bill-board. It read in great vermilion letters: CHOLERA.

That morning in my visit to General Conrad von Hötzendorf, who, so to speak, is the General Joffre of the Austrian army, he had given warning of the disease without — and justly, from his viewpoint — conceding any alarming figures. In half an hour this was all that one could get out of

that alert, questioning, and genial master of a nation's fate, who, with his grey-white pompadour hair and over-bright eyes, somehow suggests a young lion, though he is quite sixty. One of his sons has been killed, another wounded, yet he wears no black on either arm of his small body.

The same night, by rail, on this last lap to the front, was but following the white trail of the scourge. All along the ties and rails it lay, livid, in the tons of lime scattered there to destroy infection dropped by returning sick and wounded. Next day many passing hospital cars bore in white chalk the fateful legend, *Cholera verdächtig.* We may land in one of these yet. That night we moved our blankets from the stuffy carriage to sleep in the open air on one of the flat cars that carried our motors. And we woke in the morning to find hanging, one on the foot of my navy cot, one on the radiator of a machine, two pairs of much-soiled undergarments flung from a passing train.

By three o'clock in the afternoon we had passed seven trains. In one I counted twenty-seven cars, with but a single surgeon aboard. And from the battlefields in this region alone at least three lines of rail are open. Ever since the war began I have been haunted with the thought that no human agencies could, with all justice to

modern altruism and science, cope with the masses of wounded. Here, for the first time, the truth of such a speculation hit me concretely. As the jammed cars ground westward, the great red crosses on them, the "Kranke" in black letters underneath, began to dance in the back of my mind. Vanished, those shadowy crosses still flew over the weeping willows of the roadsides, over the high thatchings, green with moss, of the peasants' log hovels. And you knew that over with the Russians the same pitiful cargoes were trundling eastward.

Still they passed us. Arms were thrust out from bandages, holding caps, which we showered with cigarettes. The men shouted and scrambled for them. Tied to the button on each man's right shoulder was a small white tag, noting the nature and location of his hurt. Occasionally at a halt some grimed and hairy fellow would step off for a moment upon the lime of the white trail, dragging after him a bandaged foot. And your one thought was: It all cannot last long — it never, never can last. The while the famous Viennese caricaturist in our party, which included all social degrees from a real Hungarian nobleman to a "sob-sister" from New Jersey, sketched us on the outside of our carriage into roars of laughter.

Then the Russian prisoners. Mostly they peered from tiny gratings in the tops of their

wheeled prisons, the round-brimmed, khaki-coloured caps looking ironically English above their snub Slav noses and corn-coloured beards. To my greeting in their language, "*Drashtite! Kak posheviate?*" those crowded in the doorways around the bayonets of the guards returned the hail, and held out brass buttons from their uniforms in exchange for cigarettes. Once, in his eagerness during a stop, one tumbled out, to be fiercely prodded back into the coop with a rifle-butt.

The shift into the motors was at some tongue-twisting village. In the sunless and bluish Galician haze we headed for Sanok, among the quilted cabbage and vivid green winter rye fields, along roads marked with stucco shrines. Sanok, held for three weeks by the Russians, showed no more sign of that than one cornice, in the heavy house style of Poland, split by a shell, two bullet-holes in the Etappenkommando's window, and utter dearth of cigarettes and matches which is the unvarying mark of every captured town in Europe.

Sanok, despite its horde of soldiery, its thrifty Jews, in their curled *peikas* and black coats, was filthier than the meanest Chinese village, and without China's lamp-lit gaiety. The inn where we spent the night had for sanitation only an open yard behind; but the proprietor's wife wore an

elegant wig, and her face was powdered. If Austria has never been able to clean Galicia, let the war give it to some nation that will. A sanitary service, in our army's sense, appears not to exist with these Austrians. Vera Cruz, before we started to scour it, was a spotless town compared with any here. And sometimes one wonders why cholera haunts eastern Europe!

Thus next morning it was hard to show sympathy with my two naturalised fellow-citizens who tackled me on the eternal question of how to get back to America. They had their fare and their papers, but neither the initiative to start, nor to write to our Embassy in Vienna — to the servants they employed for the very purpose of helping them. Stated so, they gaped at the fact. Neither had ever been west of the Hudson or north of 14th Street. They were of that mass of immigrants whose money-orders support these Galician villages and half southern Italy. One was a little woman in black with a sharp chin and gold teeth bought on Grand Street; the man wore a "sealskin" coat, and greeted me over the top of a fence on the main street, behind which he was making such a toilet as one can in Galicia. Decidedly it is a country with a people which makes you an iconoclast regarding our immigration laws. This mine for the melting-pot — and after the war we shall be deluged

with its output — does fill one with understanding for the ideal yearnings to escape expressed by a Mary Antin; and at the same time makes you cynical toward the pathetic realism of Slav literature. It omits the essence of life in its milieu — filth and stench.

We followed the route of the Russian retreat. By ten o'clock we had overtaken and passed three trains of supply wagons headed for the front, in all 469 rigs, and not one motor-truck. You were in a different world, a different age, from the war in France. Long and narrow, on very small wheels, with in-sloping sides of woven willow withes, the soiled, hooded coverings of these carts suggested a toy emigrant train of our West. From every hilltop they wound forward, an endless coil of evenly spaced, whitish dots along the road. We threaded them, the heaps of hay high on each tailboard. Vacant peasant faces under round sheep-wool caps stole cowed and wondering stares at us, as they urged on the bony horses to the creak of countless little wheels in the glut of mud. You felt the amazing, searching force of organisation that war demands; ability in administration against grim, far-flung odds beside which the most complex commercial enterprises must be child's play. No. It could never, never last, this war. What of the wives, daughters, mothers, of those sturdy drivers? Barefoot in

the sodden fields they hoed over the muck for potatoes no bigger than walnuts. O, for one good winter blizzard in this grim land! The spring planting, the war, for the moment assumed an equal precariousness.

Where these outfits had camped, or rested in serried ranks, suggested, but on an enormous scale, the Klondike trek in 1898. Fires twinkled among the heaps of fodder; grey, straggling privates boiled soup in their aluminum pots. There were parks of artillery caissons, their trucks also heaped with hay. At a railroad station where we crossed the line, mountains of shrapnel and machine-gun ammunition; a field bakery of a dozen oblong, low mud-ovens, belching smoke from stove-pipes. At one cross-roads, where plainly a stand in the retreat had been made, was an artillery cover of pine branches stuck into the hillside, dismembered wheels prone in the mud, a wrecked mass of wagons — yes, some marked with red crosses. But the smaller trains returning down the road bore the grimmest flavour. In most sat mute beings with bandaged heads, or grasping their canteens in arms not yet cased in sling or splint. Grey blankets outlined hidden shapes from which you turned your eyes, because they did not brace against the jolting. And still riding across the fields, emerging or vanishing along the lines of woods, lone horsemen kept up

the search which the instinct of all flesh to hide in its final hour makes needful.

On the long hill of switchbacks, leading to the divide I mentioned, pieces of lint and bandages were scattered among the alders. Everywhere were empty goulash cans, goulash being ration in this army quite as seriously as tea is for the Briton; and, maybe, too, it has paprika transports. At the height of land, marked by a cross, we met the only motor of the day, and it was hitched to a team of horses. Down the other side, the road was being graded, and that by women, mind you, barefoot, with their short skirts hitched above the knees and hooded heads bent low on the long shovels.

One had to pause and convince himself of the calendar year. Beside such a triumph of feminism, the next instant you were jerked back a century or so. A beggar, in his garb tumbled straight out of mediæval allegory, sat waving on high a gleaming brass crucifix. Under the stone arch of a roadside shrine knelt a grey infantryman, with bowed head and rifle leaned against the robe of Christ. And on the doors of the Ruthenians' cabins — the Little Russians — were whitewashed holy crosses, as a token to their ininvading brothers, modern angels of death, to pass them by in peace.

War, you wondered, war again in this old,

blood-stained arena of Europe. And this was but the spoor and fringe of war. Shall any one ever see or grasp the seethe of it, who has the eyes and heart to tell the truth?

It was thus we descended through the darkness, until the lamps of Przemysl looped upward in even lines from that river-bed, where 70,000 men have just fallen within their shadows.

Will the Russians take the city? They have not powerful enough artillery on hand as yet. But any fort can in time be starved out. Here Przemysl and Belfort are declared the two first fortresses of Europe. "But we know very well," one officer told me with true Austrian candour, "that Przemysl is not so strong." Still, as the world knows, the first lesson of this war has been the answer to, What is a fortress? Just march around it. Liège, Namur, Maubeuge, an army may march around, but not here, through the mud and forests of Galicia.

But you hear no boasts; instead, if one pries, he gets a generous recognition of Russian strength. The feats of her artillery are one of the surprises of the war. "If our own were as effective, we should be in Kiev by now," General von Kusmanek, in command here, has said; adding, "And if the Russian infantry were as good as ours, they would have been in Cracow." Almost a shameless confession, that, of Austrian

officers' inferiority, for it is upon the officer individually that the worth of artillery most depends.

It is long after midnight. If I listen as I write, there can be heard the fitful, droning detonations of mortars in the outer cincture of forts, only one of which has yet been destroyed.

III

FROM THE FORTRESS INTO BATTLE

I JOINED the daily sortie into this unending battle, which rages east of here, in the half-circle sector from Radymno on the north to Sambor in the Carpathian foothills.

At eight o'clock we left the Café Stieber. Its fetor and filthy tables were as yet uncrowded by stout reserve officers playing chess, in gold and scarlet trappings, dangling swords and clinking spurs. We carried bottled water that we had boiled, for the third word on every man's lips was "cholera." I was told off to an officer and warned not to lose him in the field. On the steps a dragoon used as a servant dabbed at his boots with a polishing cloth. In the street was halted a long line of field guns returning from action to be relined, their carriages mud-crusted, muzzles worn and scorched from breathing death. The grey beings perched beside them slept.

We climbed into the straw that filled a springless, seatless, basket-sided wagon. At once the wizened and red-bearded old driver told me, and in English, that he used to work in a Connecticut watch-factory. He lashed the bony pair of

ponies, and when I declared them too weak to last the day out, he retorted in a breath cutting from alcohol how that was no affair of his. The long street led southeast from the rynek, by the heavy domes and gilt of a synagogue, by moving picture dens among the heavy lintels of deserted streets; past a rambling yellow hospital, its yard pitted by Russian shells.

We became but a link in two tightly packed, moving lines, that all the way to the gate at the inner fortifications and beyond crept in opposite directions. It was the nourishing vein, umbilical cord, of the battle-line. Our procession of carts piled with hay, beef carcasses, flour sacks, ammunition boxes, kept fouling, or was checked by, the returning stream. Drivers cracked whips at their poor rearing teams, shouted, dismounted to free the locked hubs. Most of the carts and caissons bound for the city were empty, but a few bore grimed uniforms and pale, loose-jawed faces — sick or wounded men — gaping vacantly at the winter mist that rose from the hundreds of sweating horses.

At last the gate, between zigzag fences of barbed wire, which pitched to right and left up the sodden grass of low hills toward two of the main forts. They were some two kilometres from the heart of the city, less than half a mile apart, and not to be recognised as fortifications

except that the birch groves crowning each had all their lower limbs lopped off. We dipped into a vast, open plain. The sun, an orange lozenge embroiled in haze, weakly glazed quilts of green rye, and the helmets of drilling cavalry. At scattered points on the soil that shone like jet, each company rode in a circle like a slow merry-go-round.

Gradually the pollard willows that made our road an avenue lost their tufted branches, cut away to clear the view and make the great glacis we were entering, until they seemed less trees than the gigantic clubs of savages set up on end. Appeared the railway to Sanok, stalking across the plain in a thin comb of telegraph poles; then occasional houses, utterly demolished except for the brick stump of some chimney. A homing cart carried a huge white hog.

"Like a general," said I, "going to a banquet."

"But to be eaten," said my officer, Captain Michl, who in civil life is a poet and author, "not to eat it."

Low wooden sheds flanked us on one side. The throng of blue-grey soldiers loafing against them with arms and heads bandaged, drinking in the pale sunlight — circular sprays of whitewash on the planks, Red Cross carts with searchlights parked across the road — marked this a field-hos-

pital. It was nine o'clock. Away to the west, across the valley of the San, the dull tremors to which my ears had long been straining hardened into the boom and throb of heavy guns. Then before spread the first reservoir of our living streams, acres teeming with the life of a great base camp behind the firing line.

Afoot, we entered between the red and white squares of two cavalry flags, into action and variety that snatched you back to those war scenes painted of Napoleon's days. Equal colour to the eye this indeed lacked; but in vastness and by the poignancy of sounds and scents it was outside any technic to portray. Your eyes were moments untangling from that pathless home of two army corps — 80,000 men — of wagons, horses, smoke, stacked rifles, mud, men, single entities like here a grey hill of oat-sacks, there a steaming pile of manure. A creek flowing through the middle was dotted with bent men half naked, gossiping as they washed their clothes. Field forges squirted flame; there was a ceaseless ringing of hammers upon horseshoes, on cherry-red axletrees; the continual thump of beaten horseblankets; the hail of comrades from one campfire to another where they boiled potatoes in their tight-covered, blackened pots, or strung shirts and trousers upon a rope line between tree-stumps.

"Hello — American!" I heard, beginning to

feel that all here, relieved for a while in this safe cover of the forts, were too preoccupied to notice among them even an archduke.

A grinning youth, square-jawed and with heavy eye-brows, slid off a wagon-tongue to seize me by the hand. And why? Because I was wearing the khaki and broad-brimmed hat of an American marine. Three years he had worked in an Ohio lock factory, returned without his citizenship papers to visit parents in Galicia, and been clapped into the army. I felt that he spoke half in gladness to meet a fellow-citizen, half in pride for his comrades to see that he recognised my rig and could talk with some one from our fabled land. All day my hat and laced gaiters branded me as plainly as if I had flown the stars and stripes, and proved the Austrian army polyglot in an unexpected way and by hardly generous means from our viewpoint.

"You like it, having to fight," I asked, "whether or not you want to?"

"Sure, when we're beating them," he said.

"But now you're not."

"Huh! Aren't we? The General says we'll be back in Lemberg in four weeks. It's only twelve miles to there, and four to Grodek, that we captured yesterday."

There was nothing for me to say. I left him, wondering how a real American could be so credu-

lous. He still believed authority, quite as the Vienna populace, when stunned by defeats, reassures itself: "It is all right. Our Emperor will allow no more of that." Lemberg was forty miles from there, and Grodek, as every officer in the fortress knows, still in Russian hands.

A hut flew a plain yellow flag, warning of cholera within. To the south a captive balloon lurched upward like some blind, gigantic insect. Stark white walls gleamed under it, surrounding what once had been a convent. Razed now except for the high gate and one mute cross, that deed in holy Austria must have been some strain, and yet — what wonder is it that with each belligerent in Europe beseeching the same God to throttle *his* enemy, War should not, as it does, look cynically upon Him?

The next hail to my campaign hat came from a cart covered like a prairie wagon. Inside, in stocking feet and underclothes, a husky young Lieutenant of engineers was eating a breakfast of ham and, since in civil life he was a business man in England, Scotch whisky. The drink he poured me tasted after weeks in beery Austria as would a mango, say, to an Arctic traveller. We did not speak of surrounding battles, because a matter of far deeper moment obsessed his mind. He sought in me, as an American, a vicarious link of sentiment. Shyly Lieutenant Karl Hoffman

drew from his dunnage an unposted letter, addressed: Miss Helen Reese, 1300 North Calvert Street, Baltimore. They will be married, d.v., next spring. In case the missive never reaches her, Miss Reese should know that her betrothed's new beard becomes him very much.

Onward in the watchmaker's cart, freeing ourselves of the swarming camp, to bump across the railway at the station of Hermanovice. No earthquake ever wrought a neater job than dynamite in that village; none could have so nicely piled the red roof tiles into heaps. Beyond the bare plain again, and over its eastern hills the dull reverberations now made you wait to speak between them. Suddenly before us scampered past three fleet, four-footed creatures, two wild deer and a doe. The hates of man spared not even them; war was crumbling the card house of life even into the depths of the wild; Nature in her last hidden nerve protested its oneness. And yet — there was an obverse to the shield. Thousands of men here were scattered in the faint earth mist, all with rifles, and in the final reckoning the defence of Przemysl may depend upon meat, yet not a single shot rang out, not a gun was levelled at those fragile, fearsome antlers. For miles those poor fugitives were the safest warm-blooded creatures. You seemed to face a miracle, till you remembered that all soldiers here

were peasants trained to kill men as an art, but to hold as an arch crime in this land of overlords the sportive act of poaching.

Toward 10 o'clock we quit our wagons for good, at a stream skirting the first hills. A new pile bridge, replacing that burnt by the Russians in their first siege, bore the steady, clock-like tramp of infantry bound toward the noisome shrapnel, now seen raising its chemical, imitation little clouds into the cirrus of the perfectly cleared day. "Fresh troops," remarked Michl, yet on halting a man or two would sink prone upon the blanket coiled over his hairy knapsack. Followed a train of field kitchens —"gulás ágyú," called in the Hungarian ranks — with their black pipe stacks. On a hill, a man with a plane-table was working out angles of fire-control to guide some invisible battery through one of the army's nerves, the sheaf of telephone wires converging to a bare tree across the creek. A regiment of reserves on a near slope sat patterned like a human carpet, intent and quiet as the dead-heads outside a world's series ball-game.

Nearer, a company commander addressed his men swinging out to battle, and you could hear the "Hoch! Hoch! *Hur-rah!*" that greeted his harangue. Where we waited for them to pass, two bearded privates were fitting a stove down in the smooth mud-yellow depths of a new bomb-

proof, chatting as unconcerned as the card-men who painted the trees at the Duchess's croquet party. A sergeant up on the bank was chasing a collie dog, and shouting —" Oberleutenant Heinrich — Hier! hier!"

But we were swept on from them, with the forward pulse of life, in wake of that last infantry. Over the bridge the road passed a whitewashed cottage. Beyond, a troop of red trousered Hussars, in their archaic flat-topped helmets, enveloped us on the gallop. From a ditch came the third salute

"You — American!"

This time, it was a skinny-limbed young tailor with no teeth, who had worked for two years in New York and Philadelphia. And his was the same story: visiting parents in Cracow, no passport, helpless impressment into the army.

"Of course, I wouldn't have come back," said he listlessly, "if I had known."

"About the war?" I asked.

"Oh, no, this country —" he amazed me. Something mute in his black eyes, furtive in the quiver of his hands, stirred my pity. "It's all so — so filthy."

"But the outdoor life," I found myself speaking as to a child, "is more healthy than tailoring, don't you think?"

He shook his head with a weary sigh. "Yes.

But it does no good — all that," with a shrug and waving one hand toward the waxing battle. "It does no good, not to no one."

I could as easily have cheered a man already dying. These encounters were getting on my nerves. And yet I would have quit sight of a bayonet charge not to miss them; they were making the day. Only in these places, under this stress, could I have so glimpsed the hearts of such fellow citizens, for otherwise and otherwhere we should have passed without a word.

Soon thatched farms lined the road, its mud a foot deep. In one yard where a woman in a yellow hood calmly was mending her wellsweep, soldiers were digging trenches, and beyond, the great 15 cm. guns of a battery stood over the arched, black mouths of their bombproofs. We had passed them hardly a rod, could look back down their up-pointed muzzles, when they leaped into action. Straight over our heads, as we caught ourselves from reeling, rushed a mighty geyser of deafening, steely vibration. A grey haze floated from the pieces, languidly settling back on their trucks; but the woman's head had remained poked down her well. We were between the lines at last, straight under the continuous give-and-take of the daily artillery duel, roaring, screeching, lacing the sky. In small danger from the Austrian batteries, because of

their raised trajectory, but any moment meat for the Russian shrapnel, which with hardly a fainter pulse and whir kept spawning its hard white puffs over the yellow birch woods and lateral ribs of dark juniper scrub on the hills ahead.

The road dipped into a hollow, a yard of fresh graves bulging on the soil to the right, and beyond a grey private or two was digging with sticks in a field for potatoes. On the left, as we mounted, soon to be sighted by the Russian look-outs, Captain Michl gave the order for taking to a deep gully by the wayside. The road now was utterly deserted.

"Right here," said he, "we were eight days advancing three kilometres." And the lines of torn trenches, littered with broken cartridge boxes, that ringed the slopes scarcely ten feet apart, attested that. Bloody field coats, stained bandages, shell clips, knapsacks, lay in the ditch, from which, every time we raised heads on our shoulders, the Captain would warn—"*Mr. Denn!* (my name as the Austrian officer grasps it). Keep down you' head, or the Russisches will see you."

A biplane came strumming out from Przemysl, straight toward the Russians' fire, plainly to spy on their artillery positions. Instantly the salvoes from them—"we" fired single shots now—concentrated upon it, and rooted us in our tracks,

watching this one-sided duel in the air. Globes of magically formed vapour spun toward those fragile wings, there in the clear sky, like foam on a stream. Their clatter relaxed. The plane paused, first to rise from that deadly fog, then plunge beneath. It hung in the air, so that you held breath. Somewhere broke in the gutter-gutter of a machine-gun. Then, whether in fear or prudence, having slivers of steel in silk and pilot, or with its brave purpose won, the bird presently dipped far to port, and banked away with a defiant clatter of cylinders, back toward the fortress.

One-man rifle pits began to notch the gully, and a kilometre found us emerging before a tumble-down shack, a field-surgeon's head-quarters. Here a very blonde young doctor and three orderlies, eating dinner off a stump by a heap of rusty rifle-clips, forbade us to go further on the road; there was no cover beyond, and instantly we would draw the Russian fire. From an Austrian battery hidden near we could hear the fitful *zing!* of primers testing out a breech. We heated our canned goulash and made tea on a mud stove in the hovel, which had neither beds nor chairs, but fourteen gay religious pictures in a frieze around the logs.

Outside, we joined the surgeon to eat. Stiff and brooding from the first, he kept staring into

his tin cup, stroking his thin beard. Down the road loped four long-coated soldiers carrying a stretcher, but the fellow under the grey blanket was leaning on his elbow, smoking. Two photographers of our party arrived, and began to quarrel because one had forged ahead of the other. But our host never smiled, and kept muttering in a low voice to Michl, whose jaw twitched a bit.

Michl's face is strong for a poet's, and though heavy, large-browed and fine. But since we had reached here, and I had seen him peer behind an out-house, he had been silent and gloomy. From that direction all at once came a low, moaning sound. I got up for a look behind the shed, and the sight there sufficed.

A middle-aged soldier with a Roman nose, and on his mud-daubed uniform the two green tassels of a sharp-shooter, was lying face-down on a grey blanket. Muttering to himself, he gasped every now and then, raising his head turtle-fashion, with a tremor of the whole body, and plunging his hands downward from his chest. The skin of his face was greenish, horrible.

"Cholera," said Michl, softly, whose eyes had been following me. "He is dying." The young doctor quitted his meal with the abruptness of one suddenly seasick.

The fellow sprawled there, between that shed and a moss-damp fence, the place to throw rusty

cans and wire — a human being in his last throes. Once he seemed singing to himself. His voice would mount from a mumble into falsetto, and with dreadful, panting intakes reach a revolting pitch.

"*Ay-ay . . . Yi-yi-yi . . . E — eee!*"

He rolled on his back, as with the will of one in frenzy, but could only feebly rub, and rub, and rub, his stomach.

"Why — why don't they move him somewhere?" I asked Michl, back at our food.

"What use? We can't take enough carts out here, haven't enough men for the stretchers. The living first. He'll be — done, in an hour. Let's get out of this." Michl rose. Already the photographers had gone into the house.

Just then a huge, glazy motor-car whizzed down the road so "dangerous" for us. A gloss of furs, a gleam of scarlet chevrons, the flash of a helmet, and the car was gone. But one face of the three in it I had caught: hard high cheekbones like mahogany, and a waxed grey moustache.

"There's transportation now," I said.

"That," gasped Michl. "*That.* Why it is our Emperor's Cousin, the Prince Leopold Salvator!"

"And terribly late for his dinner, isn't he?"

The noisome afternoon was no longer young. Back we ducked through the ditch, and crossed

the road south, past the graveyard, and to the base of the tiers of trenches. Here were two "general" graves, each marked by a cross of birch with the bark on, stacked rifles muzzle-down in the ground, one pair hung with a bugle the other with a cartridge belt. Indelible pencil related upon one of the cross-pieces whittled flat:

JNRJ
Hier Rühn mit Gott 17 Man vom Lir. No. 21 und Lir. No. 13 rüht samft.

We wanted to mount the hill, for over its brow the song and roar of Russian shrapnel was too loud for the few woolly clouds leaping into view. Surely they were shooting lower up there, searching out at close range a battery nearer than the one at the farm passed in the morning, which yet, shooting granaten and not shrapnel, kept up its single *ze-eeing* challenge.

"It is possible," said Michl. "But do not go beyond those shelters." He pointed to a long huddle of them against the horizon, deserted, roofed with timber over ruined mud walls; and turning his back, made off toward the farm.

For the first time we felt free, and started upward on the run, leaping the crumbling earth-grooves, with their sodden ruck of dead men's trappings. Pale flowers, like tiny primroses, bloomed close on the black earth. Over the ex-

ploding clouds an eagle was poised, as if a gale were blowing from them and he were joyously breasting it. Crosses were stuck wherever the earth was fresh around the bombproofs; and they, straw-lined, wrecked and riddled, could not have spoken louder of death if the corpses had been bare. Beyond, we crept down a slant toward a very madness of day-fireworks and sound.

The battery seemed less than three kilometres away, behind the line of birchwoods topping the next rise. Pale, winking flashes strung in dots between the shadowy tree trunks. Above, the expanding snowy balls might have been curdled fragments of some white thunder-head, hurled downward between us and the yellow groves. Many expired not three hundred yards away; some, likely ill-timed, spewed a flock-like vapour, lazily, along the dank grass. A spectacle transfixing, before thought of flight or danger could supervene.

"*Hi — hi!* Was machen sie hier?" came a shout behind.

Up the slope from the right ran an ungainly under-officer, shocked and breathless. Sight of our black-and-yellow brassards softened his anger that we should be, as we had hoped, directly in the line of fire between two opposed batteries; and he led us down the hill, straight into the muzzles of the well-hid Austrian pieces that the Russian

fire was searching out; there to square ourselves with his superiors.

Easy enough; they not even asked for our papers; that we were here proved our permission to men of the firing-line. Not their job, as trained soldiers, and the first I had met in Austria, to question and suspect. They greeted us with unreserved joy, friends ready-made, through pride in their authority and responsibility; through the professional fighter's native simplicity, which is the same the world over.

"We do not yet fire," explained a snub-nosed lieutenant, "because the enemy not yet have found us."

"Probably they will not find us," said a captain, who wore a raw-hide jacket embroidered as if by our Indians, "unless they have seen you up there. But our turn to shoot is soon, and then you must go back."

"Your turn?" we asked.

"Our move. It is like a game, this battle of positions. A chess-game."

They had been here eight days. The largest bombproof behind the rank of six stubby howitzers had "Villa Erdloch" pricked out with brass geschosskappen on the mud of its roof. Every man was fit, bronzed, eager. You felt the contrast to the stout, self-important tradesmen mas-

querading in uniforms of the Stieber, to the elegant graf-lings with diamond bracelets one sees on Vienna streets. Countries looking for neutrals' press-sympathy should let reporters mingle with the real men who do the real fighting — not herd them with chocolate soldiers miles from the lines — if they want partisans. They would get them.

An orderly came up the slope and dumped a pile of newspapers and letters on the ground, the first mail received for a week. It was ignored while we stayed there. The officers, joking and chattering, delighted in making their men snap the gun's breech-locks, load for us. They asked us the news of the world, and as the genial grey Hauptmann finally shooed us away, the Magyar painter in our party was repeating for the third time how Hungary was at last free —"Ungarn ganz frei"— of Russians.

We followed the telephone line, strung on thin 6-foot sticks, down the hill, past the graves, and took the road to the battery at the farm. Still at intervals it ripped out its blast that made a sheet-metal sounding-board of the skies. A voice from the 'phone in one of the pits arched with galvanized steel and sandbags called out the fire-control figures. One of the tiptoe crew, twisted the sights; others shovelled in the shell with no twirl

of a time-fuse, for they were shooting granaten. Some hand yanked at a cord — the sole fist in sight not pressed to an ear.

But suddenly, as if the throbbing shell we last fired had struck a wall in the ether, bounded back over us, pale flashes tangled the woods on the rise close *behind.* The Russians at last had spotted our position. Instantly the stout captain by the guns gave an order, and the crew ducked into the caverns. I walked over to him and asked why we had stopped shooting.

"Why?" blurted he. "Another shot of ours, and they may see to drop their fire straight on us."

The game was clear then. Some position, which we had been shelling all day, at length had found ours. Check and counter-check. It was the Russians' move now, and our cue, since, unharmed, they had found us, to keep still and not be put out of action.

They were firing salvoes of granaten, in threes, at about five minute intervals. Came a vibrant, invisible, whirring crescendo; the roar of explosions, and in the field at the corner of the grove, a fountain of inky soil. Thirty, forty, feet or more it kicked up; and soon invariably in the same spot, not fifty yards beyond us. The shots were bunched perfectly; the deflection was exact,

for a hair's lowering of the range would have wiped us out clean.

A grey group of reserves under a big empty straw rick began to shout and scuttle out to the road. For me the moments raced; in the spaces between the ear-splitting, thumping roars, I stood breathless, trying to count the salvoes, and keep my mind off the inviting darkness of the arched proofs. I think that eight fell, filling a good half hour, anyway, before they ceased. I did not remember it till afterwards, and then somewhat guiltily, but during that time my unseeing eyes had been fixed upon this: The woman in the yellow hood under the empty rick. In her short skirt and high leather boots she had never once stopped feeding straw into a hay-cutter. And all the time her little girl in a red dress, with a pig-tail down her back, equally nerveless, undismayed, was working the handle of their rude machine.

"They have lost our location," grinned the big, clean-shaven captain as I walked out to the road, bound for the watchmaker and his cart across the creek. "If they begin on the same range tomorrow, they will not find us here. We move early up the road."

The moon was growing silvery in the early dusk. A dragoon came out of a long red building, a cavalry stable, under the grove where the

first shells had struck. One had wrecked the roof and killed three horses, he said.

A youth driving a field kitchen hailed me, in English. William Krasnik, he was, with the usual tale: "Home" for three months without his "papers." But I am glad I got his name, for his case was different — slightly.

"Where from in the States?" I asked.

"I didn't say States," grinned he, "nor how my papers was American."

"What, then?"

"From Red Wing, Alberta."

We gossiped a while of the free, northern wheat country, before the anomaly hit me. From the Saskatchewan to the San. From plough to goulash kitchen. War made anything possible, even a Canadian, a subject of Britain, happy in her enemies' ranks.

IV

DEAD RADYMNO

WHAT one writes for publication of life in Przemysl must be shorn of military verbiage, even of statements too strikingly human. Small deprivation; for one becomes most concerned with the trivialities of his own existence. You may swear that you feel no dread of cholera, since vaccination has reduced its mortality from 90 per cent. to 7 per cent.; but your diminishing supply of alcohol to boil water for washing hands and face grows to be almost an obsession. You spend half a morning trying to buy chloride of lime for disinfection. Just now, at last returning with some to treat my hotel, the Grand Lipowicz, two private soldiers, who saw a cigar sticking out of a pocket, tried to grab it from me, and only retired, sheepish and saluting, when I told them that it came from the officers' mess.

But yesterday (November 2) a Lieutenant whispered an offer of diversion. We were sitting, of course, in the spacious Café Stieber, always so crowded with reluctant uniforms. A month of Austrian cafés — where one must beg on his knees for anything except coffee and cold

water — and the habits they inspire have, parenthetically, given me a brilliant tactical idea. The coffee-house of the dual Empire is a profound expression of her military genius. It solves the problem of how to kill the Austrian officers' worst enemy, time. To keep Przemysl from being successfully invested, there should be built all around it, outside the fortifications, a complete chain of coffee-houses. No Russian army could ever clear them of its enemies' gay uniforms.

Would I go to Radymno in the morning, northward on the Jaroslav Road, and hardly six miles away? Even then, through the magnetic walls of the Stieber, you could hear the cannonading in that direction. And Przemysl offered no thrill more exciting, now that all inhabitants with less than three months' food have been sent away and provision stores show empty shelves, than sneaking into a *cukernia* by the side-door and eating chocolate cakes — the Galician idea of a "speak-easy" — which are contraband, as is all food for sale.

At eight in the morning our car untangled itself from the ceaseless lines of troops, peasants, supply carts passing through the city, and we crossed the River San by the cantilever bridge. On that side, a steep slope leads to the fortifications, past the Tennis Club and K. u. K. Epidemiespital. We had met but one dead horse by the

time we reached a timbered hill, being logged to make a glacis. For an instant here one might have been in our own Northwest; even the gullies all about were filled with lopped branches; this to entangle an enemy in attack. At the inner circle of zigzag, barbed wire fences, two little huts, having gun-ports and sides all thatched with willow withes, blocked the road. In a mile, at the outer circle, we slipped cartridge clips into our rifles, and the Lieutenant consulted volubly — but returned reassured — with a sallow sentry. Here the slope on both sides swept up to the hidden fortifications, and the field telephone to the outlying batteries and trenches stalked forward across desolate levels on its little poles. Soon to the right appeared the hangars of the aviation field, and we passed a Red Cross station, a long hut half underground, completely walled and roofed with sod.

After two miles, suddenly, not a human being was in view. We had no idea how close the Russian lines were, and so got out and walked a while, keeping our heads well below the banked sides of the road, until we sighted a distant group of Austrian sappers, and returned for the car. On the way forward again, we met two women peasants, one of whom, in a vivid blue hood, assured us that there were no Russians close to Radymno; and soon it seemed that we were surrounded by

peasants working in their bleak fields, intent, unseeing, poignantly summarising what had long been for me an inner meaning of this war.

This was the unconcern of these Slav peasants, their terrible, tragic indifference to any fighting. There they bent, old men, older women in short flaring skirts and high knee-boots, digging their small potatoes — digging as against Judgment Day, with short-handled hoes, shaped more like axes, the last crop to be taken from this soil, from which their blood has sprung; the last for years, forever? Never did one look up from his toil, in those fields all seamed with rifle-pits, either at the scattered sentries, each standing in the smoke of his underground fire with only a bayonet protruding from his muffled hood; at the loping stragglers along the road, bearded youths in dusty, baggy grey; at our lone motor car; nor did they look the other way toward the continuous Russian cannonading just beyond the railway track where it crossed our road, and Radymno on the left.

The war was no longer young; but still it seemed no affair of theirs. No more to those gnome-like spirits of the soil than in times of peace were these same passing horsemen, or any rich man's automobile. Here were two worlds which even war had failed to link; two worlds on the same terrain of a single planet. Yet the sons

of those peasants could then have been fighting, dying. What of it? The parents might hear some day, or might not. It was a fact of their dim existence to be accepted with the same fatality as drought or snow; a dispensation far less vital or momentous than the housing of a crop, or a cow's calving.

Maybe the bleakness of everything depressed us. At home, even we have no November days so dark and dour, damp and raw, as these upon the uplands of the great Baltic plain. It was not freezing, but the icy east wind searched and cut our furs. All around the endless avenue of pollard willows, against the squat, black horizon, showed the occasional great dome of a church in the prevailing Polish style; and everywhere the roadside crosses, coloured madonnas in their stucco niches, even ikons mounted behind glass under the thatched eaves of cabins, gave one that bewildering sense inseparable from any European war-field, of the combined futility and persistence of religion.

We passed a squalid village, empty except of red-trousered dragoons, stamping their feet around straw fires. Two furiously pumped the bellows of a field forge, using its incandescent coals as a campfire. Towards us lurched over the hard ruts a dilapidated barouche with two white horses, driven by an infantryman, a flopping rifle

strapped around his shoulder. From its covered depths sprang a very tall officer who, after a few words of guttural German, caused the Lieutenant to exclaim to me, "All right!"

Still onward. To the right, over a low flange of green winter rye, waited a silent battery of field-guns, the men invisible in their subterranean proofs. Suddenly by the roadside we saw the shell-shattered face of what once had been a breadshop; the collapsed roof of a straw rick; a long row of one-story buildings pockmarked by machine-guns. We crossed the abandoned railway tracks, turned to the left on the Jaroslav Road, as it forked also towards Lemberg, and got out of the machine, well within the village of Radymno.

In France I had seen towns much like it, where the quick tides of assault and counter-occupation had left that wreck, sadder than combined fire and earthquake make, of shrapnel, bayonet, and looting. But Radymno spoke a word beyond even that; perhaps because of the ruder flavour of this eastern war, of its desolation in a land always poorer, of the fact that, although Radymno had been demolished for weeks, granaten were still whiffling over the skeleton of it.

Behind the leafless birches to the left, a few soldiers lingered in the gaping door-ways of a

yellow brick barracks. Ahead, the mud that had been a street dipped through a hollow, then up past a great sandstone church, built on the lines of St. Isaac's in Petrograd. Telegraph poles lay split and prone, amid tangles of wire. We met a soldier or two mooning along on duty, and of each one in turn the Lieutenant asked the number of his regiment.

"*Achtzig,*" came the answers, "*Achtzig, achtzig.*"

Why did he repeat his question over and over? Every one had the same red oblong on his grey collar. Why keep on making certain?

We stopped in front of the church. The inhabitants had been russophiles, Ruthenians. Certainly the structure was splendid out of all proportion to what the village could have been; and almost unharmed. In the central dome, on each of the smaller ones, were but a few shell marks, like broken blisters. The pediment bore a painting in yellow distemper of Christ and St. Peter sitting tête-à-tête, with staffs and haloes. This was intact, but the glass of the transepts above was shattered. Behind, a slope fell to the sterile plain, bounded within less than a mile by woods, where behind a black clump of spruces the enemy's invisible battery, in action, was drawn up. In my week around the fortress, this was the near-

est I had been to one, though at some points infantry outposts had been reported but forty paces apart.

We turned through the main street. Not a door nor window-sash remained in any house. Within their oblongs, among the charred walls and naked chimneys, could be seen no recognisable belonging of home or shop. Only ashes, sodden straw where horses had been stabled, twisted metal things. Here before a door-way was a heap of brass belt-buckles, from dead Austrian soldiers by the double eagles holding the globe and sword designed on each; there, a litter of bloodsoaked underclothing, a heap of broken rifles, warped bayonets, knapsacks. From torn cornices reached down long tentacles of tin roofing, sometimes draping a second-story balcony. They quivered in the raw wind with ghostly sounds, and regularly as the shells passed overhead — in threes now, at about five-minute intervals, giving out their silky-metallic waves of sound — every sliver creaked with an added vigour. You heard the tinkle-tinkle of glass splinters falling, as if by some magic out of the terrible pulsations of that blank, dark sky.

Now not a human being was in sight, as we turned into the market square. And in such a place in Galicia life usually swarms, with cattle, basket-sided carts, and the booths of importu-

nate Jews, in an intensity out of keeping with the size of a village. Where had they all gone? What and who was giving them food and shelter now, in this lean land? The houses wrecked worst invariably bore signs in Yiddish characters. Still standing on what appeared to be the town hall, was a high, square zinc clock-tower, with the hands on each of its four faces stopped at different hours.

No inhabitant had returned here out of sentiment for his home, or to hunt for possessions. There was no more danger than there ever is under artillery fire like this — the same chance of being hit as of lightning striking you in a heavy thunderstorm; but there were no possessions. Alone untouched by any shell, a sandstone statue of the Virgin stood in the middle of the square, behind an ugly little wrought-iron fence. Perched on one outstretched arm, she held a tiny and rather bijou Christ, yet with a very living gesture of offering Him.

We swung to the right, toward the Roman Catholic church, its walls torn by shells, but the roof not caved in. In front of it was a wrecked bed and a black horse-hair sofa, with beyond, lurking along under cover of the ruins, the sole civilians we saw that day in the range of fire — a woman hooded in black, her husband in his round sheep cap and splay rawhide coat, their son

just old enough to walk. I wondered if the furniture were theirs. But they seemed not to notice it. Instead, like a ghost, the man kept turning from the wall to gaze at the wrecked house on the corner, where on a balustrade were still two imitation century plants, topped by those peacock-green glass globes that you see in all Polish gardens. The wind flapped and flapped the black sheeps'-wool edging of his coat skirt, and the woman would tug dazedly at her high boots.

From here we turned back. The Jaroslav road fell into open country again. Across it, toward the Austrian battery behind us, and on the other side of the railway, the Russian shells were falling. They were covering the road, of course, guarding the approach to Jaroslav, hardly four miles away. Still, I was willing to take a chance along it, remembering the identification I had obtained from the Russian secret police a year before, in case of capture. But naturally the Lieutenant had no such optimistic views.

"The minute we show our heads on the road," he said, "they get our range and kill us."

"But we can go like h—— in the machine. Too fast for them to hit."

"Not in the mud. I would not try that for five million kronen. They would fire to wreck the road before and behind us, so we are caught between."

In the square again we fell in with a young soldier, who had a pinched, ashen face. He dogged us, continually shifting his rifle from one shoulder to another, pointing out houses across the square — one particularly, with huge stucco pillars rising straight from the muck — and muttering:

"Cholera! Cholera!"

"In them still?" we asked. "The bodies not buried yet?"

"*Ya, ya.*" And he kept plucking me by the arm, to follow into one of those charnels which so seemed to be unnerving him. . . .

All at once, on the surrounding shreds of roof and crumbling cornices, broke out that mysterious pick-pocking of machine-gun fire — always a furtive, elusive sound at first — which I had not heard since August, when with the British in France. Up to then, the loudest sounds between the cannonading had been the incessant twittering of a horde of sparrows carousing in the deadly litter of that empty rynek.

The ravens, always circling above, never uttered a croak, but they were very fat. . . .

"What do you suppose they're after?" I said. "The dead must all be buried deep enough."

"Ought to be," gaped my Lieutenant.

"And even ravens ought to have some reserves. Of instinct, say, against cholera — pickings."

"Let — let's ask them, eh?" with an uncanny laugh.

High time for us to be off. Higher time that that young, ashen soldier should be relieved.

We cranked and climbed into our car for the return here across that biting desolation — to the Café Stieber, and chloride of lime.

PART III

IN SERVIA

I

THE RETREAT FROM PRZEMYSL

MITROVITZ, Slavonia (Hungary), November 20.— Forced a fortnight ago to leave Przemysl, one makes an Odyssey through Hungary, and at last lands in Servia, which lies just across the River Save from here. This may be retrogression in a military sense, yet only in so far as following a stream to its source is that. Forward now lies the distracted land which at least was the physical birthplace of the world war, still quivering from events — undercurrents, in its surge — never yet grasped at home.

A Red Cross train of four engines and thirty cars smuggled us out of the fortress after dark. All the morning to the northeast from the direction of Jaroslav the cannonading was closer, and louder than we had heard it for a week. Detonations seemed to shake the gilt weather-vane of the Galician arms (a bear under a single star) which topped the ancient tower by the rynek. Here the same wagon train that had been creaking west the midnight before was passing in the morning.

Knots of long-coated Jews gathered broodingly

to watch. It was the first sunny day for an age in that fog-frosted valley; yet that same elusive spell of coming change filled the air that I had felt in certain French towns. "Only strategic — a new plan — two army corps shifted," one was told. But the great retreat in which that force, failing to join with von Hindenburg, was surrounded and lost, had begun. And we were swept along, atoms in its ruck.

Far away now, I cannot help wondering whether back there in the Café Stieber orders are being given in German or in Russian to-night.

The rails to Sanok were still open. With the light in every car extinguished, quite as if we were on an ocean liner, we passed mountainous heaps of flour sacks and ammunition boxes, against the siege now begun and likely to last for months. They reached almost to Hermanovice. From there, ruddy campfires, and signal lights that you watched to see suddenly extinguished, ringed both our horizon to the right and the enemy's to the left. A blazing shack close to the rails slid by. Just ahead, between Novi Miasto and Dobromil, the Russians' positions were only three miles to the east, and that very afternoon a supply train had been shelled and wrecked exactly where we were to pass.

There was a low moon, entangled in a seethe of mists. At first we could see off in the enemy's

direction only to the flat path for moving heavy artillery, rolled by some great machine on the black ploughed soil. We stopped to let a freight pass, and I remember watching a bearded old Jew hustle furtively out of a boxcar and dash across the fields in the direction of the fortress. Here, as we waited out on the track, could be heard the ceaseless, nightly drama of the close-by trenches — the scattering, increasing, diminishing rifle-fire. Owing to some distortive quality in the thick atmosphere, it sounded like the muffled piping of innumerable frogs in springtime.

This came from a line of hills, occasionally outlined through the fog, where two days before I had attended a field mass for a Tyrolese regiment of sharpshooters. At the time, such a mingling of the grim and the theatric had had a grotesque quality; but standing now for an hour by our train, listening to those bearded youngsters with edelweis in their hats invisibly testing the worth of their prayers, that ceremony on those ghostly heights assumed a new reality.

The hills then had been naked and sodden, except for rows and rows of underground burrows, warm and stinking inside with brick stoves and straw bunks; for pits gouged by granaten which, even as the priest arranged his vestments in a little pine board hut with a Christmas tree stuck over it, began to wail and whiffle overhead.

Down the slopes came the soldiers, twisting in grey, converging lines, massed before a bench covered with a coarse towel on which was a framed portrait of the Emperor and Empress dressed in the fashions of 1860; a great layout of gold and silver medals with striped ribbons; a thing like a baby's silver rattle, and a heavy-topped cologne bottle. Beyond the priest in his golden stomacher, a red and blue dragoon stuck his sword into the soil and hung his helmet on it.

The service began. Rank after rank, the men knelt languidly, labouredly; and when they arose after the monotones and changing keys of chanted responses, hunched up their knapsacks and kicked their freezing toes into the hard soil. Irreverently I asked an officer why they had no choir of yodlers, only to learn that not one knew how to yodle! He led me behind the throng, where, under a black and yellow imperial flag marked "88," the magnets in a field telephone began to squeak and stutter. A corporal was answering in an outraged whisper. The officer squatted by a comrade on the steep incline, and, blowing his nose with a handkerchief that gave out a whiff of heliotrope, took to checking up the regimental lists. Then a lot of saluting began, ending with a general but meek, "Hip!" The priest rang something like a dinner-bell, and began his sermon.

"Liebe Kriegeskamaraden," I caught after he had hung a spruce wreath upon the Christmas tree. He rubbed one hand on his gilded belly, and with the other stilled his wind-blown, tawny beard; continuing with phrases like, "Kaiser und Vaterland"—"Tod in der Schlacht." The pith of it was, that while soldiers in the field wanted letters from home above anything, he was there to-day to give them the greatest letter of all, one from God, the Bible. His assistant in a purple stole shifted the wreath to the medals, dipped the rattle into the bottle.

The General took the holy man's place. Sword superseded cross, signalised by a lull in the thunder of the shells, a waving of the former's cocked hat, and a stiffening of attention all around. The General was a fellow with eyes of a usurping blueness and rather a squat nose over a grey, square beard. At a short command, all the sharpshooters climbed the hill ten paces higher. With his vigorous words, the looks of meekness vanished from their faces. The wind flapped their long coats and capes, no more toes were dug into the soil, and the wagging of heads from side to side ceased. The General was coming down to cases.

He thrust a fist upon his sword, pulled at his close-cropped black moustache, and said in effect, waving an arm in one direction: "When we

met the Russians yonder they did not give us time to bury our dead. Now "— shooting a hand to another quarter —" we will win back more ground over there, and bury their dead for them." The windy *Ooo!* of the closest shrapnel yet, put both accent and period to the challenge, and an aide with a hooked nose stepped quickly to the bench, took the largest gold medal (an Iron Crown of the Second Class) and hung it around the General's neck. *"Hoch! Hoch!"* split a thousand throats. The silver medals with the red-striped decorations went to privates, as their names were called, and they stepped shyly forward. Sometimes no voice answered a name, and, after a pause — each as it came set my throat tighter — the murmur would run around: *"Verwundet."*

That other night of our escape, listening to the frog-like piping of their rifles, one felt that war itself was much of a ceremony. We did not move on until midnight, and then tore so fast between Dobromil and Novo Miasto that I had no chance either to see the wrecked train or to carry out the plan long in my mind of dropping off unseen and trying to make the Russian lines. But I will do that, yet. Morning found us stealing gingerly over jerry-built trestles, beside great bridges that were but drooping and twisted girders. In the night three men aboard had died.

An Austrian noble had charge of the train, but not one doctor was aboard.

Long trains filled with landsturm passed, with mature, bearded faces, men laughing, happy, and waving at us from the side-doors of their boxcars. We could not but feel veteran and experienced beside them, and grasp the bright and homely side of war that was to be theirs. No daylight walk to the factory with dinner-pail for them, nor life as monotonous as the machines they tended; no more routine with crops and cattle, over-worked wife, and nagging kids. They were starting on an endless vacation with their pals, like an indefinite strike, with plenty of food and without a grievance. They were headed for amazing and romantic adventures, which, since they would go only to garrison positions already captured, involved no danger, but, close to the gossip and thrill of war, would make them ever after heroes in their towns and villages.

Next morning our tally of dead was seven. So blocked was the railroad that we had not yet covered half the hundred kilometres back to Neu Sandec. It was four days before I was again at the army headquarters, in the little Polish hotel with the monkey-puzzler in the window of the back room, contemplating Servia, across the snows of the Carpathians.

And this journey has only crystallised into

a final understanding the inevitable amazement of any traveller through the Germanic countries in this war. Once away from the "front," one has continually to nudge himself to believe that the great conflict is a reality. At home we do not realise how militarism, long preparation of the popular mind for war, has disciplined and discounted its stress and excitement. These lands find themselves facing the tragedy with a calmness and self-control easier than they or the world can have anticipated. Hungary, though only lately ridden of the enemy, was, except for the Red Cross trains and the groups of reserves ladelling goulash from the steaming cauldron in each station yard, the same quiet plain of maize fields and huge-skirted peasant women that it is in times of peace. The one sinister touch lay in the endless way of anti-cholera lime along the tracks; and even this took on a gaiety by its whiteness and the figure of some bright-jacketed peasant on every platform, swinging a watering-pot that seemed to steam out milk.

You felt that Budapest — that city more like New York than any capital in Europe — would receive news of victory, or defeat, with an equanimity to shame us, were we at war. Parenthetically, that likeness almost makes one homesick; streets and populace resolve into a sort of glorified Sixth Avenue, and the signs over the

shops in their Roman-lettered, oriental tongue spell into sounds exactly like our college yells. A Jew who has been in New York takes you aside in a book shop, furtively trying to argue that spring will see the Russians there; and you find the American Red Cross volunteers, with the bloom off their first enthusiasm, since they are allowed to "see nothing," planning to give up the "good chance to see the war" that has inspired their charity.

Of course, in the Budapest war factories were girls condemned to filling cartridges and bending the stiff tin for goulash cans at a pittance a day, just as ten years ago I saw their sisters in Japan sewing sailors' uniforms. Perhaps one grows insensitive, but the sameness of war is not one of its minor drawbacks as a spectacle. You take tea with an American Countess, in what might be an upper West Side flat, though it is called a palace. She is the daughter of a Montana copper king, gossiping with girls who bear the name of a celebrated water about the winter clothing of their respective husbands, now near Cracow. You wonder why it should be conventional to pity the fate of such an expatriate. And so you sail to the ancient fortress of Peterwaradin, just above Belgrade down the Danube, which is beautiful, but no bluer than the Mississippi, which it much resembles.

Here again one was in the war zone. In the commonplace of uniforms it was Galicia once more, except that white, long-horned oxen, instead of stubby ponies, drew the ceaseless streams of supply carts going and coming from the front; and leaves still clung to the sycamores of a fatter land. Every hour through the night sentries shouted the watchword, mediævally, on the ramparts of the fort. By day you were proudly led to the execution place of Servian spies in an abandoned moat. Not even in brutal Mexico is one reminded why certain lines of bullet holes against a wall lie at slightly varying heights. I felt like writing a letter of congratulation to General Huerta. But down in the river the West emerged again in the person of Capt. Olaf Wolff and his river monitor, which has likely been under more continuous fire on the Save and Danube since the war began than any cruiser of the high seas. Yes, Wolff is a Hungarian-Norwegian, out-vying any hero of this polyglot empire: the calm sailor type with the crow's feet that a life of mid-watches etches in the corners of each eye. No life insurance agent would have taken his premium, as I saw him off yesterday, to run again the Servian shore batteries near Belgrade.

II

A GLORIOUS CATACOMB

CRNABARA, Servia, November 25.— I have spoken of the echoes and undercurrents not yet grasped at home, to be gleaned from a trip through Servia, the brewing-place of all these wars. Well, I am writing in a Serb schoolhouse —" wrecked " is too bald an epithet even for the work of God and the spirit of man in this amazing land. We are some thirty kilometres within its northern border, but as yet have heard no echoes and felt no undercurrents. We shall not.

All northwestern Servia appears to be a tomb. Outside it is snowing furiously now. Occasionally, under the pale and marching gloom across the road you sight great pumpkins gleaming in a trampled, ungarnered maize field, or the shrapnel-torn branches of a line of bare acacias. On a soldier's bunk in the corner, by a broken plate of black honey, the Social-Democratic " journalist " from Budapest with us is making the same rat-like noises in his throat by which all yesterday he signalised his satisfaction at a poor peasant nation more heartbreakingly rended, stamped out, deserted, than the blackest corner of France or Belgium.

"In Servia you will not be allowed to see as much of the fighting as around Przemysl," said my Oberleutenant yesterday, as we waited for the pontoon bridge across the Save from Mitrovitz to fit itself together. "We cannot approach the firing line. The Serbs are a very treacherous people. They have *poisoned* many of our soldiers. Why, last week when Valjevo fell, girls and women threw bouquets of flowers from balconies to our troops marching through the streets. Hidden in them were lighted bombs."

"How despicable a revenge!" I said. "So unfair for a nation of as many people as there are in New York city to wreak on great Austria-Hungary. And to think that everything started — all this world war — in a quarrel about exporting pigs."

"Pigs? Ah, yes," he laughed. "The export of Servian pigs to Hungary. But to have allowed Servia a port on the Dalmatian coast would have been giving it to Russia, the thing England kept her from, before their unnatural alliance."

"So hence," I muttered, "the assassination and the war."

Innumerable pigs were in sight — a great, shaggy-coated throng, rooting among the bleak sloughs of the Save, outside the shell-torn Servian Mitrovica, herded by three Croatian peasants in

round black caps and splay rawhide coats. Except for the Austrian landsturm and clouds of carrion crows, these swine are almost the sole forms of organic life that I have seen for two days in a rich, once peopled corn-land, curiously like our own Illinois. It has been enough. More would be hard to behold and keep one's gorge in hand.

Thirty miles of desolation, glimpsed through the swirl of snow or drizzle; and in all that area to have been not once out of sight of a sod grave and cross, from artillery positions that were but warrens of bomb-proofs roofed with timber and straw; from the labyrinths of connecting trenches strewn with the wrack of the dead's equipment; from shattered, looted farmhouses, wrapped in a ghoulish silence! Between this village and the junction of the Save and Drina Rivers, where the fight was hardest in the last weeks of September and the first of October — some 120,000 engaged upon each side — I counted on a single battlefield eight lines of trenches, few more than two hundred yards apart, with the ground between rough as a nutmeg grater from broken shrapnel.

One gets calloused to such sights. And why waste pity upon tombs, upon this one great catacomb, fated to be through a matter of pigs? Why should not Austria-Hungary tax Servia's

hams, and deny her the seaport earned in two victorious wars? She is the stronger. That is the Germanic philosophy that justifies so much that each belligerent has wrought since August 1. Silly to dispute it.

We ploughed from village to village, with such names as Glusci, Metkovic, Bogatic, Sovljak, on this fat river plain. But the thick population having been entirely peasant proprietors, the many-coloured farmhouses were continuous along the roads. At cross-roads there would be a rude cross or holy image behind a railing and under a small wooden shelter like an inverted V.

The first real battlefield lay between Nocaj and Glusci, in the rushes and standing water of a big willow swamp. Six graves lay outside the first ring of sod-built caverns that marked an artillery position. On the lathe crosses, inscribed with the mongrel Servian lettering, hung elaborate green wreaths, one with long purple ribbons and a gilt inscription. Opposite, the highest line of trenches was crested with a low brick battlement, pierced by ports just large enough for rifle muzzles, as all the better earthworks are. Behind stood a small Greek church, windowless, the oval red tiles of its roof bristling upright and shattered from bullets. Within, gilt ikons, benches, candlesticks, gaudy vestments tripped you in a muddy tangle. Red-brown stains on the floor and the shattered

plastering told a story that not even barbarous Mexico can match — of hand-to-hand fighting in a place of worship.

You rub your eyes. Civilised beings killing in churches? You refuse to believe it, until, lurching along, the venom of warfare here slowly stuns the mind with a respect for what of old was called savagery, beside such twentieth century perversions. Not a gaping, empty house that did not have its pocked lines of bullets between the smashed windows; not a yard unlittered with broken chairs, bedsteads, the straw torn from mattresses, and the bulging narrow-necked earthen Servian urns, glazed half in green, half in yellow. Mile after mile, and not a soul slinking about the empty outhouses with peaked, thatched roofs like enormous candle-snuffers; near the high corncribs, painted black below and above, quartered, squared and angled with red, yellow, and blue, like the pattern on a Navajo blanket. Not a windbreak of Lombardy poplars or a line of pollard willows that had not branches torn and drooping from shell-fire, and in every dooryard the pile of red bricks, some still symmetrically stacked, but mostly well demolished, behind which men had fallen in defending a fireside.

Fallen there? Fled? Slowly you doubt any solution so happy or heroic. You remember the returned American emigrant who told you in Mit-

rovitz that these peasants had been captured and later shot by the thousand. I had smiled then, with my tongue in a cheek, only now to feel fiercely that I had done him a trivial injustice. Surely they had not died here; in the ditches were not enough of those surface graves, long ovals of cut sod that resembled deformed and enormous tortoises. Not fled; for in France, where the slaughter was bitterest, at least the children and the aged returned with a desolate hope to rummage in their sodden belongings. Here there was no one; a people wiped out — with only the initiating pigs assembled to feed the assassins. Exquisite symbol!

Yet gradually the interior life did emerge. The houses became pathetically more pretentious, with the dates of their erection lettered over the first-story windows; with glazed reliefs in colour between the lintels, of a saint's head, a bird, a coat-of-arms, and little peaked roofs over the entrance gates. Down the highroad between cold pools of water, where the clematis still showed its fuzzy fruit quite as in our Northern States, creaked a cart piled with bedding and dark worn furiture. Through the mud beside it ploughed along an old bareheaded woman in a sleeveless skin-jacket, and the low sandals of her people with long up-pointed toes. Soon another appeared in a gateway, lugging a pail of water.

"Serbischer! Serbischer!" exclaimed the young Bohemian peasant with the crooked mouth who was driving us, and nudged me with his whip in excited glee. But not over the women. At last there was a man, a Serb, in sight. He was such a being as quite naturally would cause a patriotic enemy unbridled joy. He was white-haired, and a cripple. His knees seemed glued together, and he fought on through the mud, swinging a stick with the dazed inconsequence of a blind man, and his body in reverse direction to it — a crab-like motion.

The Social Democrat hit up his grunts, seized his shock of Karl Marx hair, and his stone-blue eyes gleamed. The Oberleutenant dropped his jaw, but no more. I wondered whether he was thinking of the eight Austrian soldiers now alive for every Serb peasant, or of pigs — or both, confusing all three.

More women in their chimney-sweep boots we saw, one leading a skinny horse, another shooing a hen, but every one seeming engaged in some belated, instinctive duty, desperately, with bowed head and furtive movements, as if to cease it were to invite a fate they knew too well. But there was only one more man. He was peering, open-mouthed, from a shattered window, and his was the sloping forehead and wide-apart, upstaring eyes of an idiot.

"Serb ——!" began the red-cheeked driver, but ended with a playful grunt.

I had jabbed the butt of his whip back into his stomach. Perhaps his ecstasy, greeting thus the sole type of progenitors for the future of this strong, pure race, as though it was a side-show freak, deserved a blow or shot. At any rate, I made the officer grin. But maybe he was only relieved that that idiot had not a bouquet-bomb concealed under the window-sash of his home.

The future of a race. Servia, after this last of her three wars, should give the biologists who work in laboratories a better field for proving the magnificence of militarism than all the locked doors of Peace Conferences. Her strong sons are gone; men that the world has always needed, and, after this war, will cry helplessly for; men that we in America want. It is to wonder whether, for the horde of immigrants from all countries that is going to flood us if peace comes, we have yet bethought ourselves to deal with the unfit that must form their majority.

One laboured on, filled with indefinable bitternesses. Behind, closed these stark sights with a dream-like finality that makes detailed recollection hard. Outside each town rose a high and tapering pole, like a single radio standard, except that at intervals upon it cross pieces bore upright carvings like little candelabra, proving some reli-

gious symbolism. Once, prowling among some out houses, I saw a sharp eared brindle bitch followed by two puppies limping and whining as they do before their eyes are opened. She was haunting her old home, searching for the children, likely, whom the pups' birth had excited and mystified. Such a birth amid such death! And the dog's likeness, by some irony, suggested that wolf which one sees in bronze, who suckled the young Romulus and Remus from whom sprang all the empire of Rome.

Darkness fell. We piled out at the last cross-roads into the ankle deep muck and freezing drizzle of this village. The corner house, once a drinking-place, sent out the faint glow from a big drumstove. Inside, on bunks crowding the floor space, stifled in the foul air that Europeans seem to love, half a company of bearded landsturm. Czechs, Hungarians, Croats, Teutons, they gave the lie to tales of racial quarrels and segregation in this army, and their diversity made them receive me without suspicion. As they played cards with one of those huge Austrian packs, they borrowed my tobacco, joked about my khaki clothes; and the Slavs chuckled at my Russian — all with the holiday good-nature of reserves, tragic in its insensibility to the blasted homes and hearths outside.

A Hauptmann sent for me, to his tiny cell of a room in the same building, lit by candles stuck into

bottles, its smashed windows stuffed with rags. He was the English-speaking type of reserve officer, whom my days at the Austrian front have resolved into a type: the commercial Teuton called from England or America into an ill-fitting uniform, and tinged with a cosmopolitanism that makes his partisanship, when he speaks English, seem half-hearted. This one had exported rosin and pitch from our South. You could see that his sun bleached beard was less a necessity of roughing it than a concession to the style of his readopted people.

He started in great detail to rehearse the war here from its beginning — how the first fighting down near Valjevo forced the Austrian drawing movement (euphemism for retreat) to north of the Save, since which retribution all around had been visited on his enemy. And then, as usual, he ended, "But I get all my information from the newspapers." Indeed, what's the use? That I do not quote him is no reflection on his sincerity; only, I find myself clinging tighter than ever to the two axioms for reporters in this war, viz.: Expect 2 + 2 always to make 5. Believe nothing unless you see it — and don't believe it then.

So, instead, I steered him into the favourite pastime of all Teutons, which is to defend Germany's entry into Belgium. And the same two arguments appeared: the back-handed Jesuitry

that France "would have violated the treaty, anyhow, if we hadn't"; that the Belgians were secretly bound to France, and were fools, who now cursed the Allies for not having accepted the bribe of non-molestation, practically to ally themselves with the invaders. But the Budapest journalist, who had followed us, ended this praise of sordidness by excitedly entering it with his grunts. And that, after two days of pretending that he did not understand English! So I escaped him to this schoolhouse — one of the hundreds throughout Servia, in each of which, had she accepted Austria's famous note, Serb teachers would to-day be telling children Austria's version of history.

All this morning I have been groping and stumbling through the blizzard, on the aforesaid battlefield between the Save and the Drina. But one has given picture enough of its edges. You sit upon earthworks strewn with empty cartridge-boxes, with every branch of the pollard willows behind snapped from the firing, and try to amuse yourself with the thought that, anyway, soldiers here have done more solid digging in a week than any subway contractor could put over in a year.

Whole forests of saplings would be axed to give a glacis. You wander through artillery positions, their caves and walls of sod bricks reinforced by willow thatching, the water ankle deep,

the dark interiors filled with bloody clothing, rusty trappings, mildewed boots, and grub. And wherever there is space enough between the great network of trenches, the little graveyards inside low palings, and the crosses of two staves with the pencilled inscriptions, the bedraggled wreaths. Overhead, always the guttural muttering of the swarms of grey-bellied ravens. Marvellous ambuscades there were — whole lines of apparent haycocks, that turned out to be brick shelters. Among the shattered houses, always the peasant woman's wooden trough for mixing bread lying split near the great mud oven. Every road axle-deep in mud, but alive with huge supply motors, many of them stuck and helpless, being hauled by shouting soldiers, that the bloodshed and devastation may go on and on to the southward.

I came upon but one corpse, among the golden pumpkins of what once had been a cornfield. The long rains had washed away his shallow grave. At each end you saw the outline of a skull, of legs and feet, stained with the palish green that corrupts such flesh.

The Social Democrat may snore now all he likes. I have vented my feelings. For breakfast I have still a can of goulash, tea, and enough alcohol in the tiny stove, without which you cannot live at such an Austrian " front."

III

PRISONERS AND AN AMERICAN

MITROVITZ again, December 1.— When I last left Vienna the premier of Weingartner's "Kain und Abel" was being given at the Imperial Opera House, and most of the cabaret shows had re-opened. One, at the Femina, was extremely funny. It was a burlesque on the war. The scene opened on Olympus, with von Moltke, Napoleon and Radetzky — a cascade of green feathers in his helmet — discussing English diplomacy. English, French, Russian, German privates, splittingly caricatured, joked with one another in later scenes. One, in a coffee-house, for there Viennese ladies knit grey things to keep the soldiers warm, a soldier impersonated one of them, holding up a stocking, as he said, "For my girl, with a limb two metres long."

An Austrian official "very close to von Berchtold," as dispatches from Rome to the English newspapers say, told me when I asked him to explain such levity that the Viennese temperament just couldn't stand worrying and grieving any longer, simply had to break loose. The same man, incidentally, gave the most convincing justifi-

cation for Austria's precipitation of the great war:

The Servians are mad, ambitious barbarians, anyway, bound to attack us some time; so it was better to fight them alone, while all the Balkan States were at loggerheads. But England plunged the world into war by her irresponsible alliance with Russia, who was bound to support Servia. Yes, the German Foreign Office did know of the Sarajevo ultimatum before it was sent, but only "by a day or two." Germany cause it? Never! She had everything to lose and nothing to win by war. In fifteen years the commercial supremacy of Europe would have been hers, anyway.

But I am writing in Slavonia, which is very far from Vienna, from cabarets, cafés, and foreign offices. Just across the River Save lies a great region, the richest in southeastern Europe, whose farms and cornfields as they are to-day would make Egypt after her last plague look like paradise. Through Mitrovitz have just passed as prisoners 500 of the folk, or their brothers, who once raised corn and pigs and pumpkins and children, and defended wives and homes in that blasted area. There was nothing burlesque or funny about them, as they stood in the village square outside the Hotel Kovacs yesterday. They looked very barbarian, indeed, but in no way mad; still, no one was sitting in the Kovacs coffee-

house, knitting and cracking jokes about them.

They had come from Valjevo, and reminded me most of men I had seen in the early Alaskan days, tottering into camp starving, exhausted, and diseased from the tragedies of the long trail. Not one had a complete uniform; here and there their khaki-coloured flannel trousers, the round caps, were eked out with long grey stockings, a blue Austrian coat, shirts and mitts gaily embroidered by a wife or mother, but not for war. All wore the pointed Serb shoes, like Turkish slippers, and every garment was grimed, torn, mud-crusted. They had no knapsacks, but mostly carried bundles of blue or scarlet cloth; half had their arms in slings, heads bandaged.

I have seen many prisoners in this war, but never anywhere living things so mute and desperate, so foot-sore and lifeless, so at their last gasp. They limped on, out of step, joggling one another, several of the weaker with arms thrown around the necks of their comrades. Even the Austrian guard herding them to the barracks down by the river, kept its eyes averted from them, and bayonets held carelessly. But all the faces in the captured throng were in some manner fine, with prominent cheekbones; rather dark and resolute and proud, with an oriental trace about the eyes, yet always with the pale Slav hair rising abruptly from their brows.

The populace gazed on in silence. You could even hear a gurgle of pity in some throats, as the most foot-sore fought on, excruciatingly. "Les pauvres!" muttered an Austrian officer, a friend who always spoke French with me. "No matter if they are our enemies, they are yet human beings." But the next moment, when I passed a lieutenant cigarettes, and greeted him in Russian, a hand pulled me back and I was ordered to keep quiet. The young prisoner wore a purple chrysanthemum in his coat, and you should have seen his face light up.

Suddenly a little sallow old man, who still carried a queer round knife in his hand, fell flat in the mud, and stayed there moaning, rubbing a hand back and forth across his forehead, until a comrade lifted him to his feet. An Austrian soldier pushed him on. He was a moving bundle of rags, his lined face blacker than a Turk's. He closed the procession; the last I saw of him, he was far behind all, with the soldier holding him up by the collar as he "walked Spanish," but with hands still sullenly in his pockets. It was not pleasant; but worse, perhaps, was the look on the face of the little Serb boy who brings you beer in the Kovacs. He was standing in the doorway, his face indescribably contorted at this glimpse of what remains of his race, fighting for life. What were

his thoughts? What did the future mean to him, if he could conceive of such a thing?

The Vienna cabarets have missed the best material for their shows, indeed. And diverting subjects are not lacking there. For example, to show the Sarajevo tragedy, as one hears it to be, an *agent provocateur* job. The anti-Slav, Hungarian Forgach, who forged the Belgrad letters before Bosnia was annexed, got a high place in the foreign office just before it. A forger will not hesitate at murder. Poor Franz Ferdinand believed in consolidating his Slav peoples, which would have threatened current Hungarian dominance in the Empire.

Or dramatise that old personal row between the German Ambassador at Vienna, when he was stationed in Petrograd, and one of the Russian Grand Dukes. The first, as the prime spirit that made the war, rather robs Count Tisza of kudos in many minds, which can prove to you how personal spats caused this whole crime of civilisation. And it is doubtful if Austrians will ever stage the following:

Lately here in Mitrovitz a visitor, an American, called on me. I live in the house of a Serb schoolmaster, judging from the group photographs on the walls of this room, with its fine parquet floor, huge porcelain stove, and wardrobes

of shiny Circassian walnut. My major domo is an Austrian-Serb, Gliza Miiz by name, a dynamo of curiosity, who is always bursting into the room to gaze at this typewriter as I click on — which is annoying, but can be borne with, as Miiz understands not a word of English.

The visitor was Ivan Tornich, a sallow being with beady eyes and upright black hair on a small crown. He had worked for ten years in the Carnegie mills at South Sharon, Pa., returning to his Servian home only after his wife had died and there was no one to care for his three young children. Not until he had described the Servian bombardment of this town at the end of September, how with deadly accuracy and acumen the coffee-house of the Hotel Merkur had been shelled and burnt, did I grasp him as the spiritual epitome of the scores of now outlawed Americans who have accosted me during six weeks at the Austrian front.

Then suddenly, like a woman who has vainly tried to control her tears, he broke out —" I cannot tell you how big a heart I have for America. It is the finest country in the world. No man there takes you suddenly by the shoulder and says, 'Who are you? Where are you going?'" He jumped to his feet, gesticulating. "Over there the Englishman, Frenchman, the Russian, all are the same. Each is a king. Wherever you go

in this country, let me follow you, work for you — I beg."

He controlled himself far better than I did. One is very far from home here. My eyes, not his, held a warm flood. I wondered in all that we ever feel toward our national melting-pot — from the fierce ideality begotten in ghettos to the Bourbonism of caste and labour — whether any one had ever been hit more strongly by what America can mean to the alien. And except for the war, I should have missed this revelation of that deeper brotherhood rooted in the absurd word freedom.

Tornich had to recite graphically how he had gotten his first job on landing in America; how he had reached a Pennsylvania mining town in a blizzard with only half a dollar in his pocket; how an utter stranger, native born, had taken him in, boarded him free, finally shipped him to the South Sharon job.

"I did not know him," said Ivan, with a gaping admiration that ten years had left undimmed. "But now I know that all men who speak English are good — like the English whiskey, the American tobacco. Ah — !" he sighed, with a qualm of homesickness. "I remember the Jack Johnson fight. I was in a saloon watching the ticker. How Jeffries at first winged him, so — and so ——" he made with his fists a fair Slav imitation of uppercuts. "It was too bad that he could

not last out, eh? And now I am here in Mitrovitz, running a grocery store — like any Jew."

The confession brought a moment as dramatic as any I have had on the firing-line. Gliza Miiz, of course, had been present all the time, disturbed and fidgeting that he could not comprehend a word we spoke, jealous and mystified over Tornich's pantomimes and passionate confidences. Miiz is a dark and ruddy, saturnine fellow, with fierce up-curled moustachios, whose ends turn back and touch his nose.

All at once he left the room, slamming the door.

"Look out for that man — for Miiz," declared Tornich. "He is no friend of mine. He is in the Austrian secret police!"

So. A "square-toe." But all I said was, "He is, is he?" remembering that I had been particularly quartered on Miiz by my Austrian Oberleutenant. Was I also being watched? From all accounts, the old Russian surveillance could easily take a leaf from Austrian police intrigue. I recollected how when I went between the lines around Przemysl, I was eavesdropped and shepherded by Austrian officers if I spoke to the many Americans caught for the ranks.

"Do not repeat anything that I have told you, to any one," said Tornich. "I could be put under arrest at any moment. I am always watched."

I assured him. For the rest, it appeared that

he had already done a turn in jail, for the usual eight weeks by which the Austrian Government punishes emigrants, under the excuse of "proving" their papers, for having become American citizens and boasting in their old homes over the easy money in the U. S. A. After that time, the maximum for the purpose according to our treaty with Austria, our Embassy can protest and free the prisoner. But Austria never keeps them longer — she badgers up to the limit of international law.

"I am a prisoner here in Mitrovitz now," said Ivan.

"Why don't you appeal to our Ambassador in Vienna? We keep him there, you and I," I explained, exactly as I had to others in Galicia, "for the very purpose of saving you these humiliations."

"Write to him?" he exclaimed, laughing with scorn. "Write to him? He would never even get the letter. It would be opened, and I should go straight to jail. You cannot know this country. To the Austrians, though I am as much an American as you are, I am still a Serb, an enemy."

I nodded sadly. I had to, because I know that this is all too true. But as an American-born, who must feel a sort of foster-father to such folk, I felt ashamed. He told me about his three children, living with his mother in a southern Servian

village. He was very sure that Austrian troops had not yet reached it. I did not tell him what I had seen around Crnabara. That would have been useless and cruel. I only hope that his eldest boy, aged twelve, is still dominating his playmates with the slang and twang that he learned in his South Sharon grammar school.

But here is the point. It is now four days since Tornich's visit, and I have not laid eyes on him. He had promised to come around the next afternoon. I have done everything, up to risking suspicion in the Oberleutenant's eyes, to find his grocery store, and have always failed. A dozen times I have demanded that Mr. Gliza Miiz — good-natured square-toe that he is otherwise — produce him. But always there is some excuse. Ivan is out of town, he is not allowed on the streets after four in the afternoon, he has moved from his house to no one knows where.

Of course, I know that he has been frightened into not daring to come here, if he is not actually behind the bars. But what can I do, except try to extract a certain grim and philosophic thrill from this touch of "Balkanism"— of the mediævalism, the childish mystery, inherent in the shadow of the anachronistic Hapsburg realm? Or try to realise that this is the twentieth century, and that I am not in the Russia of tradition, but in enlightened, Germanic Austria?

PART IV

WITH THE GERMANS IN FLANDERS

I

WORKING ROYALTY

LILLE, France, January 12.— In spite of all that France, Servia, and Galicia have revealed, the war had on a mask for me until last night. Then it was torn away, northwest of here, where the most advanced German infantry are hitting and being hit the hardest. I was in the front line of Bavarian trenches by the Ypern Canal, four miles south of Ypres. And I had a Mauser in my hands.

But I challenge that only a man with sawdust in his veins would not, too, have fired then, as this story should prove. Also, that any one would have given his eye-teeth to join our hand of poker and the pint of champagne we cracked in that pitchy, noisome darkness, knee-deep muck and water. No precedents for civilian conduct there! — on the firing line of this unending battle-siege, in this 400-mile-long tussle that appears to be the deadlock of all warfare, if not the Cross of civilised life. But not to mix metaphors, War dropped her mask merely to appear as she really is to-day in Flanders; to show man on the job in his trenches, that phase of her so jealously hidden by all the armies.

She did show more: that horror and beauty, stark power, and the beat of human hearts, after all, may be commingled. And H. G. Wells or Dante did seem anæmic beside one drenched and glistening space we saw between those close lines, still heaped, after three weeks, with French bodies; beside the spectacle of ruin, sound, and ghastly lights about the Château of Voormezeele. And these things we had reached by facing heavy rifle fire for two long kilometres. How we were allowed to do this, is a matter which again deeply affects one's neutrality. Hitherto, when taxed upon that subject, I have tactfully claimed a partisanship for Servia, Hungary, and Dorsetshire alone. Now Bavaria goes on the list.

For two days we had scooted around the French department of the Nord in royal Bayerisch motor cars. A flag of black and white squares bordered with red fluttered on our radiator, the soldier-chauffeur tooting a bugle-call reserved for sovereignty. We scoured many empty, shot-to-pieces villages, such as nowadays the Sunday supplements picture. I do not mean to be trivial, but think that the world has extracted a full pathos from blasted walls. On the back seat we formed the "Ruin-Shy Club." We noted how dreadful the sufferings of the sugar-beets had been. Field after field strewn with them, abandoned, rotting, and just as they were being mobilised into heaps.

We observed how country churches are always magnets to a fight, and that France's mortuary art is the one thing proof against shells and bullets. They go harmlessly clear through the twisted wire wreaths and china flowers of the graveyards. In a schoolhouse rigged as a feldspital was a Christmas tree effectively decorated with absorbent cotton — and a poor, waxy-faced youth on a cot, whose blue eyes glittered, and the stump of his right arm stirred, as an officer pinned an iron cross to the blanket.

Crown Prince Rupprecht, of Bavaria, with headquarters in the villa of a fugitive textile king of this town, was our temporary host. But we were guests of the General Staff of the Army, which, we had too cheerfully thought, intended to give us a whiff of powder in the west. So far, we had been led through a trench near Arras, over which a few bullets were zipping, to be told that the French lines were 400 yards away — hidden behind a grove and a country-house. We had had a touch of château life, lunching with the staff of a Prussian army corps, in the Marquise d'A——'s dining-room, which has an excellent collection of old Dutch paintings on its walls. Charming fellows, they insisted that the aged lady held their presence a godsend, a guarantee of protection, and that they were on the friendliest terms with her. She allowed them in her apart-

ment upstairs, first asking what was wanted when they knocked on the door. They had fitted the château with electric lights; and they saw a great deal of her — from the windows, as she walked alone in the garden.

Still, the nearest I had come to action was on the night that we dined with the Crown Prince. He is a greyish, tall, sinewy man, with a strong oblong face and a long mouth that in smiling turns down at the corners. He is a big-game hunter, and we were discussing Kamchatkan mountain-sheep when the press-association member of our party interrupted. Said he, an American, bowing as he rubbed his hands behind his back —" And does your Royal Highness follow the chase as ardently as did your exalted father?" There was an old-fashioned spinning wheel behind me, such as the rich bourgeoisie of Lille generally have as symbols in their salons. I nearly kicked it over. And yet, two days later, either in pity or requital, the staff of S. K. H.'s second army corps granted us permission to go the limit for a night in their trenches on the firing line.

How our General Staff hosts, who, so to speak, had orders to " hang our clothes on a hickory limb," fixed the matter with Berlin, I do not know. All through, they did their very best for us, consistent with carrying out orders. We were at dinner with the Prince's staff when we heard that

his corps had given the " yes " over the telephone from their headquarters in Comines, and " with cheers." The idea seemed to be that since we had kicked so hard to see the real thing of war, they would offer us a bellyful of danger; and, as it proved, the only string tied to that was quite psychological, had to do with testing out our courage, or bravado, by word of mouth. The chief pressure for us had been brought to bear by an ex-Senator in the party, a born politician, who, though he lost his re-election last November, gets my vote when he runs for President. And he had worked through a major on the Prince's staff, who is connected with the family of the *Evening Post's* owners.

So yesterday morning we started out northwest, with our flags and bugles, in the direction of the heavy artillery fire which so disturbs Lille every afternoon. South toward Arras all the roads and blasted towns had been deserted, except for an occasional motor skimming officers to and from trenches or corps headquarters. But here, as we crossed and recrossed the Lys, aswirl to its banks, we met all the movement and ordered turmoil just behind the front of an active army. I had seen nothing to compare with it since leaving the glacis outside the forts of Przemysl. Bedraggled infantry, off duty for their three days of rest, trudging with long coats dyed by trench mud to

the same colour as the khakied enemy; their relief returning more elastically, half the muck anyhow beaten off their feldgrau, from the innumerable straw-filled bunks in the big Comines powerhouse. And not one face showed strain or ill-health — some looked dogged, perhaps unthinking, many were pale and earth-stained under their tawny fuzz; but no round skull wobbled on its short neck, no eye was filmed or overbright.

We edged the ditches to pass cavalry, their horses amazingly fit, the riders' cheeks aglow under the dull bluish covers of the helmets; or Uhlans, crowned more broadly and carrying their lances, though without flags, deftly as riding-crops. But this is a time when the war sits lightly on horsemen, and many of them are in the trenches. There were landsturm, assorted as to age and smartness, perhaps, but in uniforms as yet unspoiled, and with the same swinging, businesslike lope as the regulars. Covered supply-wagons creaked grittily on the rue pavée, holding calves for slaughter — schnitzel on the hoof — and lines of black field-kitchens, like toy steam-rollers, catching up. Wagons were loaded with fresh planks for roofing bomb-proofs. A lieutenant of artillery in the doorway of the inn " Au Pigeon Voyageur " was wiping his eyeglasses as he made a speech to his men returning to their guns. We had plunged into the pulsing fringe

of action; yet not over-looking on the curbs and corners of twisting village streets the staring, limp-clothed human relicts of a conquered people.

Comines lies just across the old French frontier, in Belgium. We had luncheon with our generous corps' staff, in some residence all dark with lambrequins and terra-cotta plaques. It was the usual officers' mess — the long table lined with mystifying uniforms, bantering one another, but carefully gracious to you; boiled meats to eat, yet more of the wine of the country than beer. And that our hosts were all-Bavarian was plain from the captain on my right, who had been to Oxford, and was willing enough to admit in argument the social and economic dangers of a military hierarchy. Consider that, from a "hide-bound German" soldier, on the edge of battle!

Finishing, another one rose to say that, after enduring the sights of a lazarette or two, we could go to the field-batteries that would be full in the give and take of the usual afternoon bombardment. Then it would be dark, the only time decently safe for entering the trenches. "And any one who wants to spend the night there"— he winked out his eyeglass, looking about and lowering his voice, but as if he expected his messmates to grin while we shuddered —"will have a full opportunity." I felt then like a boy scout being

instructed in bugaboos before his first night in the woods.

In the hospitals, more iron crosses were being distributed. Some of the white-faced, bandaged recipients smiled gloriously as the officer shook their hands. In one ward, for this was the new town hospital as though made to order for the invaders, we came upon the sight which always drives me from such places: the square white screen about the iron cot awaiting death. Finally, to the barrack-powerhouse. With the machinery all cleared away, the expanse divided by low planking into 6x3 foot spaces for each man on the hard cement, it was like nothing less than a roadhouse of the early Yukon days on a huge scale. Here for their regular three days away from the trenches, the men, all with boots off, dozed on straw, mended clothes, wrote letters on their knapsacks, just as might sourdoughs in from the long trail, and with the same placid countenances, grim yet grateful. It was the life off the job of the hardest soldiering, perhaps, the world has ever known; but it mostly impressed me with the smallness of that world, of the universal sameness — in the prone attitudes, the facial testimonies — of all men under the terrible stress of effort, whether in the bondage of force or riches.

Three o'clock found us threading the narrow streets of Houthem, the divisional headquarters,

and a stage nearer the inferno of the trenches. Already any windows left in the village were rattling to the detonations of shrapnel; their sudden-spawning white plumes over the long rise west of the town made the woods on its crest seem alive. The place itself was shelled nearly every afternoon. A few more house-size holes in its walls and roof, and the brick church de l'Assomption would be no more. Inside it, quite two companies of young volunteers were at arms' exercise and loading-drill. Again it was to wonder how the war could be fought without churches. The incessant click-click-click of breech-locks under the shattered stained glass, the trickle of lathes and plaster from the imitation vaulting, mingled with the shouts of under-officers teaching salutes to youths who whirled about on their heels like mechanical toys. The benches had been piled in the churchyard, where most of the graves were brand-new, with German names on their wooden crosses. The chancel had been shoved aside, front to the wall, to give room. Alone undisturbed, maybe in intentional irony, was a great plaster saint holding the infant Christ, as a Greek warrior in armour stretched supplicating arms to Him.

We climbed the belfry, but only to see a shattered Norman church, with a rooster weathervane and a wrecked village rise from the crest of woods. Between and beyond these, the German cross-fire

over the invisible French trenches yonder appeared to meet, in white spurts like two streams of cloud sped from separate air-currents; and waxing furious, brought out a thundering answer from the French batteries further north. On the ground again by the divisional station, two soldiers came down the road from that quarter carrying an elegant new coffin on their shoulders. And behind them tooted the motor-car that had taken our official cinema men to the artillery up there. Exactly what had happened, the counter-insinuations in the pair's stories only fogged. A shrapnel shell — or a granate — had exploded in the air — or hit the ground — ten — up to a hundred — yards away. Somebody had dropped his machine and run, but some one else had skipped out first, while No. 2 had fled only because No. 1 wouldn't stand his ground while he had shouted to him, thought *he* had, et cetera. One boasted of a splash of mud hurled against his back, which was quite clean, both where he could and couldn't see it. They agreed only in their breathless resolve to hustle back to Comines, with the twenty feet of film that the first peep of sun in a week had vouchsafed them.

Then came our turn, but we had no such luck. We crossed the railway line to a park of two 7.7 pieces, behind a cover of branches stuck in the mud, blazing away shrapnel as fast as the range

was shouted and nimble hands, each with a metal timing-key, could twist the scale on a shell's nose. I made for the cave in the embankment, where an officer was receiving the range from the fire-control, who worked it out with his instruments and by figuring angles in the trenches themselves, some three kilometres forward. Just this I had so often seen, though in " direct " firing (yet with a more complicated control) at our navy's battle practices. But here was no play, no mere competition; like a real duel venomed with life compared to one on the stage.

" Beide Geschütze ! " called the lieutenant with the black felt of the telephone-receiver at his ear. " Fünfundzwanzig, und siebenundzwanzig ! "

A private shouted this from the mud-bedded logs of the hut door. Peering out, with fingers pressed in your ears again, you saw the whole gun-crew standing so; then the arms of the pair kneeling at the two breeches yank back, and the snubby grey muzzles, forward of their armour shields, try to strain upward, in the dimmed thunder, from the parallel recoil cylinders under each.

At each leaping blast, the shouted figures increased. Between them, I gossiped with the lieutenant — well as I could, for he spoke no English — on the optics and mathematics of the game. He had beady, dark eyes and a close-cropped moustache. For all the tension he

showed, I might have been talking to one of our ensigns, at the job of qualifying navy gunners.

". . . Dreiunddreizig. . . . Und ein Viertel tiefer!"

He sat on a carved oak chair from some wrecked country house, but the 'phone relay box was on a packing-case. There was a double hand-saw leaning against one mud wall, a shelf, with tea-cups, and a tiny, tinselled Christmas tree stuck high on another. In the back a bearded orderly slept his off-duty tour in the dusk of scattered straw and grimy uniform coats.

"Wieder, Wieder! Siebenundzwanzig — zehn!"

But we had fired our last that day. Artillery duels from permanent positions, as I once explained, are like a chess-game; moves (firing) are taken in turn, to check and counter-check. Regularly this battery shelled from 3 to 5 P. M., when it knocked off, and the Frenchies took a whack for the next two hours.

"You must go," said the lieutenant. It was almost five. "In an eye-wink they shoot right on us."

"But you're going to stay," I objected.

"Ah," he laughed, though his eyes fell, "but I must."

Yet, in the grip of his hand on mine was not the least tremor or lingering.

Outside, our General Staff cicerone was summoning impatiently. The gun-squad were leaving their breeches, scuttling behind a ruined brick estaminet for shelter. All rather a fizzle as yet.

Then back in our motor at Houthem I first perceived the string tied to our freedom of the trenches. But it was no work of the good Bavarians.

"This afternoon, in the trench where you must go," said he of the General Staff, "fifteen men were killed by shrapnel. They shell the trenches all the time. They get the rifle range by day and shoot all night."

Plainly he was trying to scare us out of it.

"You must advance across three kilometres of open ground," he added, "always swept by heavy rifle fire, and by machine guns often. Men are killed and wounded every night going back and forth. You want to go? What do you say?"

Maybe he wanted to hide from us the dispositions of the various headquarters, or the exact routine of trench life. But they are all in the German army regulations, in print at Washington. Or had he solicitude for our lives? But back in Berlin we had all carefully absolved any one from responsibility. He had some inscrutable desire to pin us down to a programme before we had looked the ground over. The two married

scribes in our party, now reduced to four, began very sensibly, in the native phrase of one, "pulling the wife stuff." John Reed and I pleaded indecision until we saw for ourselves just what we must go up against. It was pitch dark then, and beginning to rain.

Such tergiversations finally brought us to the brigade headquarters in a farmhouse parlour, half-way between Houthem and the village seen from the belfry. By the huge kitchen fireplace was rigged a sizable telephone exchange, tended by half a dozen soldier-operators. And soon as we saw the twinkle in the eyes of the good Bavarian colonel there, a stocky fellow with a large nose, Reed and I became adamant. We would go the limit, even blindly. We compromised with our General Staff host on two hours in the trenches, and the whole night at the regimental headquarters, a mile up the road, and well within the zone of incessant fire from the French lines. I still do not understand him; whether the guile he seemed to show was the soldier's embarrassment when sidetracked from routine, or that real simplicity and lack of self-assurance which so impresses Englishmen in the Teuton. At any rate, he did not go beyond the brigade headquarters with us. But the married scribes were agreed for reaching the regimental base.

And then began that night of nights. We

started up the long road to Hollebeke village, in tow of a lieutenant with a square jaw and eyeglasses, and a bow-legged non-com. It was seven o'clock, drizzling hard. Ahead, over the swelling battlefield, the boom of artillery was dying fitfully, only to be replaced by glimmering rocket-lights shot from the trenches, which, like flashes of greenish lightning, reticulated the torn timber and tottering walls of houses. The soupy mud was ankle deep. Momently, emerging out of the obscurity, we met whining provision carts, a belated field kitchen, a lone horseman with the dull gleam of a cigar at the apex of his great cape. A well-travelled road, too defiant an artery of life, in its ceaseless traffic to and fro, with death, defeat, or victory.

I do not know just where the rifle bullets began kicking around us. But until we reached the village they must have been spent ones, since on our northwest course woods and a swell of land cut off the French trenches to the north, though soon they were not a half mile away as the crow flies. What had been said about heavy firing all night on the sights got by day was true enough. But in all the twelve hours we were under fire I heard only at scattered intervals the purr of a machine gun or the thunder of detonating shells.

At first now I read no menace in the wiry notes that entered the song of the rising wind in the tall,

tufty-topped poplars which made the road an avenue.

"Please — please," came from the lieutenant, "to walk ten metres apart from each."

I dropped behind the non-com., who was in the van, and Reed observed the thirty feet in my rear. Suddenly every one had stopped talking. You can read all sorts of fears into a stormy night under swishing branches. Certainly in the fields to the right bullets were striking with pops like very venomous firecrackers; but the taut-wire vibrations overhead were but inviting sighs, surely, in the concerted night-sounds of a proper front. A time, I reflected, when the bachelor fatalist has a mean advantage, less of will than temperament.

At last the winking rocket flashes seemed to push the village around us. It was as if walls had enclosed us in a shooting-gallery. I had been wrong, of course, about the sighs overhead. The tuck-tuck on what remained of slate roofs in that little lightless Pompeii — the village church's resembled black lace, exactly — cut them off instantly. That sound of steel upon slate: the first live note of the war I had heard, at Le Cateau in August, would it round things out for me as *it* strove? A knot of soldiers were getting a hand-out of grub, silhouettes muttering, stamping feet, before one candle-lit window. Then again we

were in the open between the poplars, in that sombre, funnel-like avenue.

Only not the receding walls alone now raised the winged reports on all sides. The non-com. flashed his pocket light, carefully, straight down, making a bright circular mirror of the passing slate-coloured mud. I did the same with mine. One could end the war by taking those small electric things from all the armies. There was a hedge on our right, behind a wire fence which twanged a bit now and then. A post got *his* once. Down our single file I heard some one stumble, exclaim, and then a lot of hard breathing. The heavy scribe, certainly. What a time he had had back there in the Houthem belfry, squeezing around the bell! Could he fit in a trench if he wanted to? I fell back to Reed, beginning somehow to dislike that hedge, and to talk. The smallest twig, you know (I said), can deflect a bullet at right angles, and only ten feet from a rifle muzzle! One had spoiled a shot I took at a bear last year, a cinch —

"*Rechts!*" uttered the bow-legged one, crossing a plank over a ditch. A grey thing striped like a cat scampered across the disk of his light. We had turned through a broken fence. Dead ahead now, the soaring star of a rocket-light lit up the Deneckere farm, where we were, the regimental headquarters. Long low buildings made

a right angle pointed dead against the sweeping rifle-fire, and thus a shelter from it, but not, naturally, from artillery.

The colonel's bomb-proof was dug under and against the nearest wing. Here a head, thrust from the earth, grunted a greeting as we followed the planks through the yard. Then down a stairway carved in the soil, a drop of twelve feet or more, with a turn in the middle, ushered us into Colonel Mayer's headquarters.

No crust of ceremony to break there! but it would have been the same if the twinkling divisional colonel hadn't telephoned that we were coming. The Bavarian blue, not Prussian red, was on all the caps now. In that 6x15-foot cave my eyes got used to a big mirror at one end, all stuck with picture postcards, and behind the green shade of a lamp the whitest man this war has allowed me to know. There was something very Yankee about his thin mouth and iron jaw; hair greyish, but toothbrush moustache black, as he sat there over his maps. Such a personage, so encompassed, does not unbosom himself recklessly. We were more inclined to take account of ourselves first.

"Well, I've got my story, all I want," panted the heavy scribe, who had stumbled on the road. "That bullet about nipped me in the heel. Did you see? Fell flat on my face dodging it."

"*Kerr-kerr-kerr! . . . Keep-keep-keep! . . .*"

came the tiny shriek in the diaphragm of the telephone receiver; but the big sergeant on duty at it, by the stove in the dim end of the cave, never relaxed his benign grin as he responded.

"Why, these people," said Reed, who believes in the lawlessness of every one except the soldier, "they'd wreck the Garden of Eden just to lay one telephone wire."

The lighter scribe, trying all the time to smile, was observing, "We're awfully far front, aren't we? Everything I'm interested in is away back." He meant hospitals. He is writing a best-seller, with an American Red Cross doctor as the hero. Then the pair of them began a nervous bantering, as to how they might detour back to Houthem in the morning, to avoid that bullet-swept road. No trenches for them.

The Colonel was telling us how his two regiments had since December 2 been holding this most forward point of the line — and so the hardest beset — close south of Ypres. They defended two sections of trench, one 800 metres long and the other 400. They were waiting for the boys on their right to catch up with them. The last French attack had been made around Christmas. The enemy had advanced in close formation of fours, and been mown down, to a man, by machine guns.

"You'll see them," he smiled at Reed and my-

self, "still heaped there between the trenches."

This was the farm of the Château Voormezeele, where King Leopold had kept one of his mistresses. She called herself the Countess M——; might have been that famous one of the more famous hair-dressing, like as not. The old King was certainly a character. We would pass through the grounds to reach the laufgraben (approach trench), still a good half-mile from here.

A row of bottles under the big mirror freakily likened the bomb-proof to a barber-shop. On one side of it was tacked to the plank walls a queer Masonic placard with the eye and sunrays, and "Gods et mii" beneath in archaic lettering. A big silvered crucifix leaned out from the other corner, over a coloured, Botticelli-like print of a woman in a bed approached by two obese angels. All around under the ceiling, in the gap where the board walls ended, spindly, waxen weeds had sprouted and grown high in the warmth. Of course there was a Christmas tree, back in the sergeant's corner. Talk lapsed. The telephone's fitful falsetto was a thin substitute, in our sod-wadded silence, for the angry, curt detonations that filled all the darkness outside. The eye-glassed lieutenant and the non-com. had vanished somewhere. Supper was ready in the other wing of the farm, and above ground.

We ate in the kitchen, which every day might or might not get its quota of shells. Where they had come through the roof, whole doors had been nailed to the ceiling. The north window had been straw-packed and sealed with boards, that south had every other pane broken in the December fight. A brass French cuirassier's helmet, with its long switch of black horse-hair, was cocked over a gilt mirror on the pink-striped wall paper. Between this and the big stove, we sat down at a round table with white tablecloth, to a thick soup, beef, potato salad, and naturally, since we were in the hands of Munichers —

"Der bierkeller," waved the Colonel, as one of the two orderlies who waited on us opened a closet behind him, dove in, and reappeared with armfuls of the black braü, every bottle in straw. Reed and I were taken aback. Already, to compete with the mounting geniality, we had planted on the table the pint of fizz that we had packed along to open in the trenches. At once we saw that hospitality would not hear of our broaching it.

"When I write to my wife," said the Colonel, after the first "Gesundheit!" with glasses, all standing, "it's a lot I'll have to tell her about tonight."

The English had been using the château as a headquarters when he took it. The officers had

been at dinner, scuttling away so quickly that his men sat down and ate the lobster mayonnaise left on the table. They took 218 prisoners. But probably Turkos were in the opposing trenches now — you could not tell for sure.

And all the time the telephone on the table at one side was peep-peeping to keep the big sergeant busy, and on the other an orderly was turning down the covers for the night on three bedbunks along the wall. A bottle of anisette appeared with the coffee. We squeezed condensed milk from painter's tubes, just as we had spread butter on the rye bread. Cigars were passed.

A youngster in a red cap appeared from outside with a bundle of letters, the mail from corps headquarters, but the Colonel waved them aside to fill our glasses again. Two soaked young messengers, fresh from the trenches, one in a very bright helmet, came in for permission to go to Comines. "We report that our work is done," they saluted, clicking heels, and were dismissed with a genial "Jawohl, ja." And then there entered from the same depths the being, the young Lieutenant, who proved to be our guide into the inferno.

My first impression was of a swarthy youngster, hardly twenty years old, who probably had not shaved that morning, grabbing a glass of beer from the table and reporting to Colonel Mayer

that the machine gun which we had heard growling from time to time belonged to the next brigade. His black hair was brushed back from an exact widow's peak. I imagine that over in his native Munich before the war one would have called his face chubby; but months on the deathline had wholly steeled, smoothed out, that chubbiness, except from the round, incredulous joy in his eyes. His name was Riegel, but in the three hours we were together names counted in no phase of life. When, after we left the trenches, I learned this from the Colonel, he was rather scandalised that I asked, too, his given name; for the German army list recognises nothing so tender; its various Riegels are numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.

Reed slipped the superfluous pint into his pocket. Riegel unpocketed a letter for the post with a telltale air of nonchalance. And then the Colonel rose to shake us much too solicitously by the hand. The heavy and the slight scribe were doing their best to appear envious, smug, and funny, all at the same time.

"You know that every night we have men killed or wounded," said Colonel Mayer solemnly, "going back and forth to the laufgraben."

Why rub it in? Could he think of no softer cry of wolf than our mentor of the General Staff had worked?

"Too bad that you will miss our concert to-

night," the Colonel called after us. "We have some very fine musicians in the regiment, and a piano in the château —"

Concert. What did he mean? Thus, foolishly puzzled, the three of us found ourselves outside again in the pelting, snapping, poisonously singing night.

II

NIGHT IN THE TRENCHES

THE rain was sheeting down through air curiously clear. Riegel, with a warning about my pocket flash, rippled the circle from his own upon the wobbling planks leading to the highroad, and we were in its ankle deep grey soup once more, between the lofty poplars. We kept our old direction for a full quarter-mile before turning — to the right again — first down a cross road, finally into the château grounds.

At first, the spell and terror of that highway, descending in ever louder metallic voices, concentrated in this: the ceaseless stream of life it bore; that this stream, silent, lightless, as though leaderless, should flow on through such a hellish darkness, so serene, secure. But the night was its compulsory time, for feeding the slaves of the trenches, relieving the exhausted with fresh forces, carrying out the dead and wounded. By day, a man or cart appearing on that road might forthwith be the hash of a 7.5. And the night, when artillery cannot aim, only brought a more scathing, microscopic blast from rifles. At the furthest the road here was but a half-mile from the French

trenches, with the modern arm's even trajectory two miles.

"Rechts gehen! Rechts gehen!" The muttered rule of the road echoed every moment. Two "goulash kanonen" gritted past. Hot food is wheeled to the very mouth of the laufgraben, all hands eating in the darkness of seven in the morning and the evening, but twice a day. A stretcher next, the limp form under its blanket rising and falling too yieldingly to the pace of his four bearers. A short file of privates, who seemed to stagger slightly — stagger, not duck. In the loom of a rocket their mud coats were ashen, their mute countenances copper-green. Not once did I hear an order given, see so much as an under-officer. The traffic was running itself. The least man in the ranks knew his stunt, automatically. Here at last I realised to the full that organisation, concentration, mighty spirit — the feared, scoffed-at ideal of the indomitable German machine — its unhuman perfection, in duty, by discipline.

We had turned at the crossroad, due north, getting the fire no longer enfilading, but straight in our faces. The rockets, whose glare only we had seen up to now, appeared as blinding green stars, hovering slowly, the small parachutes from which they hung invisible, down a clear expanse to the right. But ten times as persistent, blinding, as

any photographer's calcium flash. The dripping trees, mud, drenched fields, swam and glinted under them as if cased beneath glass. We zigzagged among great pits in the road dug by granaten. A crumbling high brick wall on the right, running with us and so giving no shelter, ushered into the château grounds.

Ahead, huddled a torn mass of low buildings. We met a horse and driver carting cord wood. "For the Colonel at the farm," remarked Riegel casually. "But little wood for burning is left anywhere else." We passed under an archway into the open again. Close to the ground in one house a cellar window glowed faintly. "Field headquarters," said the young man, and loosening his arm which I held, "Sehen sie, Brücke." A tiny plank bridge. So ploughed here by shell-fire was the ground that the incessant rain had cut deep channels between the pits. Yet every moment we veered around undrained ones, glossy ponds some eight feet in diameter. A lone soldier limped past. "Verwundet?" asked Riegel solicitously. "Nein." Caving-in earth in the trench had mashed his foot.

Dead before us rose the château, or what had once been such a thing. Even as lit by the floating fire-balls beyond, I have now a mental image of it confused — Macterlinckean. For instantly such an association filled me; this was the very

country of the macabre master, the very staging he would conjure. Perhaps the sheen of the park pond, a sudden glimmer of marble limbs through bushes on the right, aroused it. Low, very broad steps mounted to a series of stately engaged columns between two shallow wings. But above, all was crumbling, without roof or cornice. And the moment's shelter it gave only served as a sounding board to the streams of bullets that it blocked.

"Exploding bullets," said Reed. "Hear that! I can't believe they're not using them."

Then we rounded the east corner of the pile, for the last and hottest 200 metres between us and the laufgraben, sloping well down hill, sheer in the face of the enemy's lines, now not a thousand feet distant.

You reasoned that the bullets, which detonated like loud toy torpedoes, in the mud, on trees, on brick, were the ones to ignore. The singing, zinging ones that passed you by were the devils that the next instant might . . . They flew like swarming wasps with some new sped-up, metallic buzzing apparatus — creatures that having begun a concerted assault upon you, suddenly changed their minds two inches from your face, and swerved away. Yet when the first sort pocked a stone a foot off, or the tree you were passing on a level with your eyes, *they* bore the more maddening, personal challenge. Then, perversely, all my

inner, excited, and exhilarated being turned the more vengefully against *them*.

The average, the essence of it was just that. And if Riegel stood it, took his chance thus night by night — to say nothing of his mute, peasant ranks — why shouldn't I? We were all flesh and blood, each with but his single life to lose. Still, there were moments when mere anger curdled into a kind of giddy desperation; these, once or twice, before we reached the bottom, as all Flanders seemed to blaze up too clear, and yet confused around us, in the blinding emerald of the floating flares. Then hidden eyes in the "enemy's" trenches saw us, live and pallid targets, dodging in and out among the shadows. Then all sounds clattered, roared up into a tumult.

A board bridged a ditch in a thicket; we stumbled across, plunged down, to find ourselves knee deep in water, both arms outstretched on each side into the banked mud walls of the approach-trench.

The Lieutenant led, then I came, then Reed. Standing, just our heads would show over the sides of the earthworks; but, since we were still face-to against the fire, it might seem useless to keep them ducked. Yet we did, for the first yards of floundering forward showed how the trench twisted, always raising against us a collar of soil. And that floundering! Long ago, of course, we

had doused our light. Here and there, either on little wooden piles or thrust into the walls, planks had been laid; but our feet only felt out the wood to collapse with it; or stamped into the side soil to slip again to the ice-cold bottom. It recalled desperate trails I have followed in our Northern wilderness, though by day. This was beyond anything.

You had to lunge out both fists into the mud on either side to keep balance. Even so, my coat absorbed the mud-water like a lamp-wick, the splashing plastered our faces, Reed's oaths behind were the right and only talk. And never two feet from us, through the ruff of earth, did those crackling reports cease, or the taut singing overhead.

Suddenly Riegel chuckled. I had waded out from between our six-foot-wide walls, bang against a great muffled creature. And "Bing!" he welcomed me, quite unawares, till he turned his bearded face, lowering the rifle from his shoulder, but keeping the muzzle stuck through the small square port in the top of the mudbank. He grunted something, as I tried to scramble from the water into the small cubicle where he stood, hollowed from the wall.

"Get him!" I said, in English. "Go to it!"

He kept on blazing away.

It was the firing-line at last, all right. The

man was only contributing his little whisper of destruction to whatever neutral fools might be plashing about among châteaus and muck, a scant four hundred feet away — across that thin line dividing all the hates and armies of the world. After our long, helpless facing of invisible hundreds shooting against this fellow, at us, one craved a champion to retaliate; or merely to celebrate our being in one of that pair of great parallel burrows that to-day reaches from the North Sea to Mulhausen, four hundred miles; that since the Great Wall of China has never had its match in history, and that (Heaven help us!) will never see its death-dealing equal.

It was ten minutes past nine o'clock when I caught up with Reed and Riegel, who had turned to the right (east) through the flooded highway. At intervals, banking the outside of the walls, rose the flat rims of armour. Every couple of yards or so came just such cubicles as the first, raised enough above the main ditch so that the rifleman's knees were out of water; and each man in them, dogged and impassive, was firing from time to time.

"They don't wait for orders," I asked Riegel, "but just shoot as they please?"

He nodded.

"And for how long at a time?"

"Two hours on duty, then two off — to sleep

if they can — for thirty-six hours." (I don't pretend to quote his German.) "Then three days' rest at Comines, and return. These men's relief comes tonight at half-past eleven."

We had stepped up into an alcove, longer and drier than the others, where the firing side of the trench seemed to bulge outward slightly. Riegel lifted a flap of tent-cloth, crouching under it, and bade us follow.

We found ourselves in a square cavern, a sort of big dog-house, some 5x9 feet in linear, but not four feet high. The walls were mud, except for boards on the entrance side, and the roof was black tar paper under the planking. A young man with deep black eyes, prominent teeth, and a rather startled look quite native to him, was sitting changing his socks on a flooring of straw. A candle burnt on a cigar-box sunk into one wall, a note-book beside it. Opposite him, sitting on a heap of coats, blankets, cowhide knapsacks, by a lighted stove no more than six inches across, a tall sergeant held a telephone, buzzing its inevitable "*Turr-turr-turr.*" From a peg near by hung a pair of field glasses, a hunting-knife, and a felt-covered canteen. A bag of pink candy peeped from a side hole in the mud.

A tight squeeze-in for so many of us. Riegel did his best to compose and unlimber us, stopping only, with his warm Bavarian intuition, at the ba-

nality of introductions. His mate of the socks, holding up one muddy boot, stared, grinned himself into greetings. Reed seized the moment to unpocket the fizz, and I the card deck. Neither one spoke English, nor ever had heard of a dissipation called poker. Still, they tumbled to our teaching; they would play a hand. You could tell by their quizzical stares, as I dealt upon the straw, that they felt exactly as we did the foolish joke of the thing. The sergeant as well, for when Reed had the cork out of our pint, he dug up from the dunnage an aluminum cup, which we filled and drained in turn.

Riegel called for a new hand, Reed drew to a pair, the other lieutenant took three, and I two. I had queen, king, ace of spades, a long shot to fill a royal straight in tune with our other risks. But I failed; drew the queen of hearts, which yet won the hand. Riegel had nothing. Reed hadn't bettered his pair of trays, and our host threw down jacks. We were starting another round when the post arrived. A dripping cap thrust through the flap, and the same orderly who had brought the Colonel's mail placed a bundle of newspapers on the straw and vanished. There were Lille papers of that very morning, Düsseldorf ones of the day before. From the pile the officer of the teeth drew a letter with very slant handwriting, which absorbed him, and, reflexly,

the rest of us for many minutes. Riegel winked at me with a sly unction.

Then we gossiped, as much as the German language permitted Reed and myself. Several points about this war had to be cleared up at the point of the bayonet, as it were. For instance, how about the stories so sedulously circulated in Berlin that, in contrast to the rancour between the German and English lines, friendly notes were tossed across between German and French trenches? The pair here laughed incredulously; they had never heard of such a thing, and didn't think it likely. Only, when the last news came of 100,000 Russian prisoners taken in the East, they had torn the headlines from the official communiqué, wrapped them around a stone, and flung it into the opposing ditch. We told them about an officer we had met — he had lived for two years in Newark — who on Christmas Day had crawled out of his trench and spent half an hour chatting with a British captain, who had crawled out of his, while all shooting was called off.

That was not impossible. Always in war, just as the closer one comes to the fighting the fibre of men becomes finer, so in proportion rancour and prejudice against the enemy diminish.

"If the end ever comes to this war," I said, "it will begin right here in the trenches."

They nodded, amazed a bit, but seeming to find

the idea reasonable, as if they wished it might be so.

"Neither side is fighting for any idea — principle," I said; "but for trade, and to cover the blunders of chancelleries."

"*We* are only defending ourselves," retorted Riegel, properly schooled as he was in official sentiment. "Fighting for life, for our ideal of empire."

"Idealismus," muttered Reed, who, I knew, was restive to get outside, and talk sociology with the fellows with the rifles.

And soon outside we went, to the bitter end of Riegel's section of trench; into contrast as overwhelming, abstractly, as if, physically, we had at once been shot down. The mud walls of the cavern had smothered the outer tumult to the last whisper, inside there in a wadded silence and warmth. Now we were exposed again, in all the wild, flying, racketing, pitchy darkness of war.

Once more, knee-deep in water, we slopped and stumbled along that crooked groove of warm humanity and death. Here and there great wooden reels wound with barbed wire were perched on top of the banks. Some rumour must have gotten abroad to the silent muffled figures, firing at intervals from their niches, that friendly strangers were about. As we passed them, a head

would turn, and a hoarse voice mutter drily, with a sort of gleeful pride:

"Zünftig, nicht? . . . Zünftig!"

Zünftig is upper Bavarian slang, equivalent to, "We're the boys, eh?"

A huge warm paw would thrust out to seize and shake your hand. At intervals shallow recesses were carved under the walls and hung with tenting. In them the men rested for their two hours off duty. We pulled aside the flaps to see them there, sitting hunched on their hairy knapsacks — there was no room to lie — leaning against one another like ninepins, drowsing with eyes shut and hairy chins on their grimed bosoms. Unlike the quiet General Staff trench at Arras, where the officers' cave was hung with Persian rugs, there was no jocose "Restaurant zur Wilden Wanze" lettered on these men's cells, as we had seen down there.

"Der Herr Doktor," said Riegel, lifting a flap in the inner bank. And lying full length in a coop no bigger than a coffin, a lank, somewhat sallow being, the regimental surgeon, crouched up to greet —

"Amerikaner?"— and confide with the instant intimacy of the pits that he knew a young lady over in the States. Fumbling in his knapsack, he drew out a post card. It was addressed to Miss Annie Goerz, 1304 West Front Street,

Plainfield, N. J., who doubtless knows without reading this, that his feet though often wet are never cold at soldiering, either.

At length we halted where the trench seemed to turn away and double on itself. For some minutes the green fire-globes had been soaring over us from all directions, close and erratic as his moons to Jupiter, cutting out our features, the very grain of the mud, with their cruel, ashen light. And, as always followed such irruptions, came a crescendo in the whirring and detonations. For once I both dreaded, and hoped for, a night rushing of the position, though that had not happened for the three weeks these men had been here. "Herr Tisch," said young Riegel, maybe impressed also, "is what our soldiers call the striking bullets." Then, in a lowered voice, with a shy eagerness, he said:

"You want to do something? They're only 140 metres from here — the French Schützengraben."

"Yes," we answered baldly. "What?"

For reply, he took the Mauser from the fellow in the scooped place by us. The next moment it was in my hands, with the muzzle pointing through the eyehole atop the bank, across that short and hellish space. Be it on my head, I did it, fired twice.

Before each shot, Riegel, turning to a figure

behind him, unnoticed before, gave a sharp order. An explosion from some kind of machine cracked our eardrums, and the spark-dripping incandescence of a rocket-light bloomed and swam on high. It's useless to arraign the eagerness with which, as in the dream which had so long held us, one leaped to do this. Maybe it was partly in retaliation to the deadly storm whiffing for hours around us; or in gratefulness to those Bavarian officers; or mostly in homage to the brave and patient men of the pit, a deep-reaching instinct of brotherhood to be, for a moment, ones just like them.

As for our good President, and his warnings about neutrality, I will wager anything that, if he had been there, he would have made a good second.

"Get any one?" chuckled Riegel at me.

"Call it a couple of Turkos," I gasped.[1] "Different from bear-shooting, this."

"Look," murmured Riegel.

[1] The chance of hitting any one was about one in ten thousand. No real partisanship, naturally, influenced this impulsive yielding to the spirit of the fighters in the trenches. The reader will understand that had any man been in sight I would hardly have deliberately aimed at him. I cannot consider, either, that my neutrality, except perhaps technically, was in any way violated. It must be remembered that my presence in the trenches was officially authorised by the German Government, and that I was subject to the orders and suggestions of its officers.

We raised ourselves for an instant, heads and shoulders above the crest of the trench.

"You can see where we have the two machine guns, in lead-trenches forty metres out," said Riegel, "which swept the French in their last advance. They won't attack again while they're there. We're keeping them from sapping out to any like position."

Yes; you beheld those two gun-shelters, a bit to the left, roofed like enormous bee-hives, or, rather, shaped like titanic porcelain insulators for high-power transmission. But under the shifting, searing light-balls, they were the least of the spectacle. Fifty yards to the right, too, was a cantilever bridge, with steelwork unhurt, across the Ypern Canal. The horror and climax of the night lay in the space between. Bodies, bodies unburied, unrecognisable, unless we had been told. Lumps of matter, like swollen sacks, in hundreds, scattered haphazard upon one another, heaped like sacks. Without visible flesh or clothing; all mud-coloured, drenched, gleaming terribly with the slimy pallor, like verdigris, of that awful field. It resembled a vision under sea; as if one saw through a green translucence the encrusted toll of some old disaster. . . . Life might exist for, might endure, even justify all manner of deeds, purposes, monstrous perversities — but not such as these, not that. . . .

Back to the officers' cave we sloshed, and to bottled beer, be it not forgotten. It was after eleven o'clock. The sergeant by the stove clapped the telephone to my ear. Distinct and far away I could hear the tinkle-tinkle of a piano. So that was what the Colonel had meant by the " concert," which we were not missing, after all. Some one was playing down in the divisional headquarters, at the lower farmhouse — the Chopin waltz in A flat, I recognised, as a drip from the tar-paper overhead trickled down my back.

Soon we started stumbling and wading out toward the château, I being the last to leave the shelter. Alone a moment with the sergeant, he pulled me back by the shoulder, fumbled in his knapsack. Silently he opened under my eyes a little black jewel case which held some golden Bavarian decoration, and his iron cross. Then he handed me the deuce of clubs, which I had dropped from the card deck.

Emerging from the pit, crossing the little bridge, passing the torn wrought-iron gates into the noisome and ghostly château grounds, I had exactly the feeling of a mountain-climber who has won a perilous apex, only to face the more dangerous descent. Reed showed a splash of mud on his right cheek, made by a Mr. Tisch's landing on the trench-top at a level with his head. But it was by the crumbling pillars of the château,

the glimmering marbles of the pond, that I first began trying to dissect the secret of the order, automatism, concentration, the grave, stolid spirit in this small section of the great German machine at its job, that we had glimpsed. It was magnificent. What was its key?

The game of death no more tensed any one's nerves than its routine seemed to bore them. Is the German divinely, or devilishly, gifted above other peoples for this business of fighting? He is no Oriental, no fatalist; nor, with his sentimentalism and introspection, can he momentarily love fighting for its own sake, as do the Celts and the English. Could it be patriotism, discipline, alone? Nothing else seemed left. And if it were these, then they have been carried to some *n*th power, beyond the grasp of men who do not know the soul of this race as their own.

Riegel led us down to the field headquarters, where we had seen the glow in the cellar window. "Les caves du château," welcomed the genial major there, rising from his brass kerosene lamp, with a gesture at the ranks of empty shelves where wine had been stored. That very afternoon a granate had burst through the window and taken the foot off his bed. The customary orderly, at the regulation telephone, sat in a Louis Quinze chair. A gilt Directoire mirror reflected our faces, and my trousers were muddying pink bro-

cade. Next to the atrocities on sugar-beets in the war, my heart bleeds most for the violated dignity of whole antique-shops-full of "art" furniture. As we left, there breezed in to go on duty, night glasses about his neck and code-book in hand, a student-like captain with eye-glasses — the only officer we met who did not seem to accept us without reserve. His eyes searched us with such estimation and doubt that I hold he was no Bavarian.

In the road outside the grounds we passed the night relief for the trenches. They came down between the inky avenue of poplars, in single file, muffled, bent forward, huge-booted. Except for the guttural "Rechts gehen!" of the under-officer leading, there was not a word, not a salute, as they vanished on by the hundreds with shouldered rifles and a stiff, swishing sound of clothing, to that next cycle of their tragic routine, which might always be their last. Then a couple of belated goulash kanonen, and we were turning in at the farm gate.

Outside the kitchen door, rose a three-foot heap of beer bottles. The thin scribe and the stout scribe, still sitting at the white supper table, asked us to show our iron crosses; but they had no vain hindsight to declare that, as things had turned out, they wished now that they had gone with us. The Colonel's concert was over, the men of his post

who had been playing on harmonicas and hand-made guitars strung with telephone wire having turned in. But the telephone rang up to announce "Parsifal," this time played from the very hall of the château. The artist was the Hauptmann commanding one of the two trench machine-guns, a lawyer in peace times. At this nightly diversion by the regiment of connecting up all the field telephones, we had heard a general and two colonels perform musical acts, at least not very cruel.

Between numbers, the Colonel would cut off the line to ring up a trench, as one might call central to ask the time of night. And you heard this:

Col. M. (sipping his anisette) —"Ich muss die Verluste wissen."

Orderly (repeating from 'phone)—"Drei totd und drei verwundet."

Col. M.—"Gefangene?"

Orderly —"Nichts."

And so forth. It appeared that his two regiments were three ammunition wagons and four French officers to the good that day. Their average daily losses were seldom more than a dozen, these piping times. And then came a message from headquarters which caused the good man to cross his legs on the other side — but no more. I did not understand all of it, but it was to this effect: Information had been received of a general

shifting of the enemy's personnel all along the line. Each regiment must ascertain and report the character and number of the troops directly opposed to it.

Did it mean a coming attack? Who could tell? Colonel Mayer shrugged. At 1 A. M. we all turned in on the bunks along the wall, except Riegel, who had vanished down to the corps' base for his three days' breathing spell.

III

CONQUERED FRANCE

BRUSSELS, January 17.— Never before, in the opinion of her cafés, has Brussels at this season been so gay. Uniforms, uniforms everywhere, and plenty to eat and drink at standard prices — in the cafés. Plenty of American relief here, though the section of France German-ruled has none of it, and presents a very different picture. Here citizens have recovered from their pride or fright or dummheit or whatever the Germans would call it. General von Bissing, Military Governor, that steel-eyed man, whose eyes are yet the most penetrable part of him, bangs a fist on the table and exclaims, " Pin-pricks! " to any fuss his subject people might make now. Bars " close " at 10 P. M., but roaring " speak-easies " have their doors swinging into the small hours. The soldiery on duty tour them from time to time, to keep tabs on their friends.

This sounds superficial, cynical. It is, but inevitably, as will appear. As guest of the German General Staff, I am surfeited with hospitality, guided by its officers in motor cars, told what I cannot do and can do, according to a rigid pro-

gramme from which escape is almost impossible. The Bishop of Malines, for instance, must not be approached. His famous interview is a thing we speak of in whispers, passing a copy of it, suppressed here, but which we secured no matter how, furtively from hand to hand under our table in the Palace Hotel.

For three months, a twenty-fifth part of France has been occupied by German armies. Most of this area and of Belgium has been possessed from the beginning of September, six weeks longer. In all of it, civic administration, the welfare of the civil population, has been in the hands of the invaders during that time. I am finishing a journey from end to end of this conquered territory, just behind the lines.

Traditionally the conquerors here should be hated with a passion unmatched between any two other peoples in the world. The neutral travels with eyes and ears open and hopeful for any hint of solidarity between soldiers and populace — for any straw of human feeling to relieve a situation inevitably dark.

I have been disappointed. Slight insight into the Prussian temperament in the rôle of victor makes clear enough that the plight or good fortune of an enchained population rates nothing as compared to the triumphal feats of German arms as shown in ruins, ruins, and again ruins; with a

day's diversion to look at concrete bridge-building.

Still, straws of emotion have been left out to grasp; it could not be otherwise, where life is so tense, unparalleled, uncertain.

A week ago, as we were threading the narrow streets of Namur, under the forts which were captured so quickly, because the Belgian General Michel failed to relieve them, a well-dressed woman standing on a corner called after our car:

"*Boches! Sacrés boches!*" The word is insulting French slang for the Germans. We were identified with them, were of them, their friends. Reporters sent thus to the front (*sic*) before had taken care to tell me that no ill-feeling existed between the Belgian populace and the Germans; but that it was "dangerous to talk English" in Belgium, its people being angry that England had not more quickly come to their aid. In Germany favours have been granted certain press association men, who primarily value "interviews," or who for other reasons are partisan.

After luncheon that day we were convoyed, not to see the Namur forts — being rebuilt with Belgian labour, and so far too interesting for our eyes — but to the site of a conventional churchyard fight on a hill. Given liberty afoot for a while, I lagged behind our uniformed hosts.

"There's more of them," said a workman in a long coat, jabbing a thumb toward us, to his com-

panion. "They're all the same," he satisfied his scrutiny, puzzled that we wore no uniforms. Two girls came along, one carrying a shopping net full of packages. Politely I lifted my hat; the pair surely heard me beg pardon, declare myself an American. Yet, how, indeed, could that be, judged by the company I was in? They tore past with a repudiating mutter, heads sullenly thrown back, and I heard the thin one with the raven hair snort.

Yet that very moment we were facing the reverse of the medal; and one's hat had to come off, in the admiration which has not once relaxed these ten days, at the physical order, organisation, foresight, and thrift of the conquerors. Everywhere they have enrolled the unemployed to till deserted land. They are replacing the wrecked, old-fashioned French railway bridges of brick arches with steel and concrete. They have built cut-offs, sidings, new permanent ways with standard grades and heavy rails — all the work of their pioneers. In the miserable hotel at Charleville, where we spent our first night in France, they had put in steam heat, the first hotel so equipped, I wager, in all the French provinces. One may rage that the Germans invade like Huns, which I for one deny, but they are remaining like Romans, as if they had come to stay.

There outside Namur, a horde of stoop-shoul-

dered civilians, each with a red band on his arm, was crowding before the pay-window of a brick building. Judge the number of workmen employed here by the figures on the arm-band of one that brushed past us; he was No. 3398. To keep them from starving, they were being paid half in money, half in bread, for work on the forts — to be used against the Allies in the chance of their advance. "And they are glad to be employed so," said our officer, really convinced of the truth of his idea.

That morning we stopped in Givet, France, the first town in the republic directly in the path of the German armies that passed through Namur. Here the fighting lasted four days, some 67,000 invaders attacking its fortress on the Meuse. We were shown over it, and before mounting the glacis to see the thirty-foot holes — through old brickwork — of 30.5 siege-guns, our General Staff cicerone said: "This is an example of the most modern style of fortification." Half an hour's wading through its debris only proved that no work of defensive construction had been done here since the dates over the casement arches, of which none was later than the '70's. "A big-gun platform," he continued, pointing to a squared space. "Of cement, of course," I said, "but where is it now?" "Ah, it has been removed with the gun." (!) A fellow-scribe, on his first

lap of war work, kicked one of those ancient, solid cannonballs such as at home we heap around our soldier-and-sailor village monuments. "Why, hand grenade," said he. "Yes, a hand grenade," agreed the officer. And no one laughed — until two of us tried to lift it and couldn't.

You cannot think this deception, you hate to believe it ignorance. In all politeness, you could but congratulate the War Office that no valuable secrets would be given away to foreigners, this trip. Only, and I think justly, one may feel his amour propre stung. You would like to yield place to the ghost of Mark Twain, which, not having followed (I hope) the war for five months, might extract something beside ennui and pity from the monotony of ruined dwellings and small shops. But we did see the dynamited arches across the Meuse that have figured variously in publications as "Bridge at Liège," or "Blown up by the British at Compiègne." And the town hall, which you have seen portrayed to be "The Linen Exchange at Louvain," and, equally, "Bishop's Palace at Malines."

At the Hauptquartier in Charleville we messed in the railway buffet with engineer officers repairing railways and bridges. Here it was significant and heartening to find, as one always does in the ratio that he approaches the firing-line, a lapse in rancour toward the enemy, especially that fostered

by the inspired rumour and press of the capital. This policy has been to sustain hate of the English by offsetting against it pity for the French, and repeating tales of mordant tolerance between Germans and French in the trenches. Our Bavarian colonel at the Deneckere farm laughed at tales of friendly, signal spade-raising from the trenches (phosphorescent spades at night). Here, too, such facts were unheard of. The major next me at dinner smiled when I told him of the sentimental letters, featured in the Berlin papers, written by Frenchwomen to German officers who had been quartered in their houses.

"There may be single instances of that," he said, with true Prussian candour. "Now, I take tea nearly every afternoon with Monsieur le Maire of this town. But one does not need to be told how any population really feels towards us. Of course, of course," he nodded broadly, "we know. . . ."

Civil administration and the local gendarmerie remain as before in all communes, though subject to the officer in command. This is the military custom for all subject civilised peoples, and we ourselves followed it lately, when in possession of Vera Cruz. From Charleville half the population had fled before the invading armies, on rumours of "atrocities" circulated by the Belgian refugees in September, and had not yet returned

— could not, naturally. This seemed to be the true figure for the smaller towns in conquered France, especially in the region south of Givet and Longwy. A smaller proportion left the cities; in the Arras region most villages were utterly abandoned and in ruins, having been the actual scenes of fighting — it is a habit of the French to place their artillery in town squares — taken and retaken several times. But France itself shows little damage wreaked because of franc-tireurs, and officers continually compliment the "sense" of French civilians in not defending their homes. This in contrast to the never-to-be-forgiven Belgians.

"But this is a time," my major said, "when only the criminals, the Apaches, of a town return. In some way they sneak across the lines. They come to cajole or steal the pay out of the men working for us. We hand them over for punishment to their own gendarmerie."

That set me wondering. Even an Apache may be a patriot, and seizing German coin from his fellow-citizens — must that be unalterably criminal?

We walked back together to our steam-heated hotel, whose proprietor talked German too much and too well, was too spry and prosperous, to seem to me a loyal Gaul. His young son had just burnt a hand on the new chauffage. But op-

posite the station in the darkness a small park was wholly railed off with horizontal black, red, and white banded poles. Sentries with breast shields bearing an eagle on a sky-blue field stood by their little black-and-white zigzagged sentry boxes, which, together with the opening of innumerable cigar-stores, are the chief visual brand of Teutonic occupation the land over. One house there, though it was almost midnight, still blazed with lighted windows.

"Our Emperor's field-quarters. He is there," said the major in a low voice, as though confiding a stupendous and secret fact; and, come to think of it, no one had hinted of his presence in the town until now, when we had all done justice to the tank car of beer arrived from Munich that afternoon. "And the Chanchellor is naturally there, also."

We strolled through the utterly void and quiet streets. Eight o'clock saw all citizens indoors, by regulation. One had not even to look at the signs to know that the wide avenue with the sycamores was named after the local church's saint, and that the shops were "Le Magasin du Louvre"— or "de Paris." You knew that the square with the very chic and up-to-date statue of the republican goddess, where the high and perfect gables of six Louis Treize houses cut the clear sky, was the "Place de la Rêpublique"— or "Constitution."

The town verily smelt of France. And then from the open door of a café, where we had seen placards advertising that same Munich cargo, came harsh voices, guttural *sch* sounds; spurs clattered on the cobbles, spiked helmets glinted. Somehow, before those silent, sleeping — or sleepless? — French homes I was reminded of the changelings of northern folk-lore, of the troll-babies thrust into village cradles, who grow up in a week and crowd out, starve, the peasants' babes. How else did they feel behind those shuttered windows, the soft and proud, thrifty and impotent, old men and girls and youngsters of a subject people? . . .

We had entered conquered France from Metz by rail. The change from Germany, through captive Lorraine, to yoked France herself, was impressive by a very lack of drama, in the cold mists and rain enveloping the Vosges. Wire entanglements outside the great fortress were the first marks of war; then captured Belgian cars, advertisements of apéritifs; a paler, more rambling architecture, ampler windows, innumerable German flags, and the flat, pink and fattish faces of soldiers in red caps, in helmets, close to the car windows or bursting their striped sentry boxes. Tunnels wrecked by the retreating French, under repair by the constructive Germans, glowed with gasolene flares. The cold and blooding Meuse

covered the dark, swampy meadows of Sedan. Limp and spiritless loiterers, old women, meek-faced men, appeared fitfully in the passing villages, with their mossy tiles and curiously soulless streets. In just such towns last August I had seen in full flood, before the advancing von Kluck, this people's terrified flight before the march of war. But now the deeds were done, the exodus ended. You saw no burgeoning mothers wildly pushing carts that toppled with chairs and bedding, nor kiddies nursing kittens in their cloaks, none knowing whither they were bound. Only the unfit, the incapacitated by fortune and spirit, had remained. And as the Prussian train rolled on, an officer, pointing to some house or factory which by miracle had missed ruin along the way, would say, with a satisfied unction:

"That one, you see, it was not necessary for us to destroy."

The day we left the Emperor's headquarters, again travelling by rail, was a big one in the way of bridges. Six of them, spanning the wide gorges of tiny streams in the Ardennes we were led out to admire, and by implication the engineer officers and pioneers rebuilding them; though German firms supply the material by contract. There was no escape, no chance for a word with the appealing sodden natives on road or street below our giddy revetments. The grotesquest day

ever known in the job of war-reporting. Never again can I look a bridge in the face without calculating where in its girders the holes for dynamiting it "in case of retreat" should be bored. Never have I been so filled with admiration for how military men — I mean our hosts — can dissemble their boredom and choke their sense of humour, when acting strictly under instructions.

That night after we reached Lille, that enthusiasm wilted a bit. The boom of artillery in the direction of the English Armentières met us at the railway station; also a motor car of the Crown Prince of Bavaria's staff, with an aid who had a sword-cut on his face and smelt of violet sachet. We skirted a block all in ruins by the station, and the only war damage that is conspicuous in Lille, and were put up at the Hôtel de L'Europe. Except for the manager of the International Harvester plant in the suburb of Roubaix, only German officers lived there. Among them, when I came down to dinner, a round-headed, dapper little Hauptmann with the sort of beard that is encouraged to hide no chin was seated in a wicker chair. Suddenly he began mumbling something, then exclaiming. It certainly sounded offensive, but it was minutes before I realised that his epithets were directed at me.

"Schwein! Schwein!" he uttered furiously under his breath, the phrase which in Germany

equals the genealogical fling that you must use smiling in Montana.

Mind, I had not opened my mouth, spoken a word in any language, though I was wearing khaki trousers. I first got wind of what was up from indignant members of our party, one of whom began scorning me for not sailing in with my fists. At this another, who has lived in Germany, asked with a white face if we all wanted swords through our bellies, for assaulting a German officer under military law. The other uniforms now ignoringly crept away, as if washing their hands of the affair. And we gathered so close and interestedly around the little fellow, who had shut up — that he rose and left, too.

How word got to our General Staff cicerone, I do not know; it naturally had to, and quickly. Soon back came the dapper one, and, quite as I expected, began apologising.

He said that lately he had spotted a lot of English spies — that seemed to be his métier — and had thought I was English. Besides, he was very tired and nervous from overwork. All of which was to be accepted as graciously as one could. Then I tucked in:

"If you thought that I was a spy, why didn't you report me to the proper authorities — instead of going out of your way to insult me?"

He pretended not to hear, and was off again,

sincerely hurt and sorry, I am sure, for his mistake.

But what is one to think, how is one to act, if such incidents are possible, when you are a guest of this army's? To put it mildly, What *is* the acid test for a once-sympathetic neutrality?

IV

GERMAN SWORD AND GALLIC SOUL

You gladly escaped to mingle with the subject populace of Lille, though warned that it was " better " to loaf in the hotel.

Three days spent thus with open eyes and ears left me with the acutest memory of the office of Monsieur le Maire. He himself was not visible, and had he been, in the anomalous position of still holding all his vested authority, he could not have felt himself so free to talk as his assistant, whom I did see finally. Soldiers in spiked helmets, clinking spurs, stamped through the mediæval mairie with requisition " bons " from their officers for him to sign, commandeering here a factory or there a wineglass. The long corridor was hung with portraits of all the city's mayors, in ermine and military medals when France was imperial, in stern frock coats for republican times, epitomising her quixotic history.

It was not easy to win this assistant's confidence, seated under the gloomy lambrequins of Gallic officialdom. And never have I seen a man so nervously worn, so hopeless and pallid as he, with such dire circles about his small black eyes. But

like any Frenchman under stress of real emotion he coldly held himself to facts and figures. Lille was the largest city of the richest manufacturing district in France, the centre of all its textile industry. It had with the suburbs of Tourcoing and Roubaix a million people. Since the German occupation on October 13, Lille had paid 12,500,000 francs in aid to inhabitants and — levies to the invaders. One quarter of the million had nothing absolutely to eat. The city was at the end of its string; it had not a sou left.

"The outlook is very black," murmured the official. "We do not know what will happen. We see no hope except starvation. Your American relief for Belgium is needed here a hundred times more."

As if to twist the buried knife, Lille was paying both the wages of the men working on the new fortifications, and for quartering officers and troops on the population, the latter at this rate: 10 francs a day for officers, 7 for non-commissioned officers, 3 for privates.

"Practically, then, they are taking cash from citizens?"

"Yes. But it is the custom of invaders, their military right."

"Speak freely. Have they committed any excesses?"

"They have acted," he answered, without a

quiver or reproach — but, Oh! how the words cut —" according to their lights. You cannot expect us to be in love with them."

" Yet many of your factories still are running? "

" Oh, yes."

I asked the truth of the story current among the inhabitants that the Germans had requisitioned all the flour with bons (to be paid after the war and by the French no matter which side won), and then sold back the part of it that was spoiled at double the price paid on paper, and for cash.

" It is true. The city had to buy the spoiled flour and distribute it gratis to the bakers. This in order to keep down the price of bread, for the Germans had demanded of the bakers an exorbitant charge for the rotten stuff."

But one must ever bear in mind the *right* of the military, within humane and civilised bounds, to consider first its own exigencies; and to ask yourself in hearing of oppressions or " injustices ": If these officers were Frenchmen, ruling a like section of conquered Germany, would their acts be any less high-handed? It would be as easy from talking with German officers to justify their measures as, by listening solely to civilians, to condemn all in a blind sympathy for them. Still, a neutral's instinctive sympathy is with the under dog, and thereabout France was that canine. For all denials of military men that soldiers have no feel-

ing against non-combatants, the latter are naturally venomous toward them.

We cruised furtively about town. German officers met us with stares, but never demanded our right to be there, so confident were they in the effectiveness of their regulations. I wore the grey Austrian army cap that I was required to don in Przemysl, and often it brought me salutes. Once two officers, who must have spent their last leave in Vienna, nearly climbed out of a café to greet me, calling "Servus!" But not so the privates, perhaps because of the red notices posted everywhere —"Achtung! Soldaten!"— warning them to be wary of spies and not friendly to strangers. Now and then one clattered up behind you, asked a quick question in German; but since I always answered in the same language, he would slink away, satisfied.

Huge requisition notices in French were posted everywhere, headed "À la population," signed by the Kommandateur. A yellow, Kriegsnachrichten placard detailed the losses in hundred thousands of each of the Allies, but with no mention of the million and a quarter Germans to date hors de combat. A horrible example this, supposedly, which loiterers raised shoulders and smiled knowingly before; really, an instance of Prussian crudity in stirring apprehension. The latest decree ordered all persons owning more than

100 kilos of food to report the fact, for purposes of requisition, plainly: one wondered how American relief would fare. Another "cancelled" French mobilisation orders, directing all men of military age to report at headquarters, under heavy penalty for disobedience or for any one who "concealed a mobilisable." Smart scheme for listing workers for use in trenches and on gun platforms.

A bony horse and dilapidated cart loaded with coal staggered through the main square. Half a dozen women, dressed and stooping like beggars, followed it holding sacks to catch the dust that trickled down. Nothing like that in France, you reflected, since the Commune. In the doorway of a shoestore, where I had bought puttees, a grey dame sat knitting, which carried one further back into history, via Charles Dickens.

"Go and watch where the coal is distributed," croaked she. "The soldiers pass by. They laugh and jeer at the poor women."

The goodwill of this one, who with her two friends whispering at the stove inside were the bitterest, most fatalistic folk I found in Lille, had been hard to win. An American, indeed, was I? How could that be, if I were here convoyed by German officers? She had never heard that Americans, too, were savages. *Hein!*

"You ask about the English prisoners? How

are they treated?" repeated she. "The people are allowed to give food to the French, the Hindus, when they pass through here. But nothing to the English. A baker will run out to a company of them, offering bread. But before they can take it, German soldiers have rushed up and spit on it."

This was the only slur on privates or officers, of many heard there, that I could find generally confirmed. The characteristic French generosity the story showed gave it weight. To every reason that I cited, for German actions as customary or inevitable in conquered territory, she challenged me, her bloodshot eyes narrowing with suspicion —

"Vous pensez, hein? Vous pensez?"

When suddenly the afternoon concert of artillery began to roar, she faced me with that grimness of her race which at its blackest never loses cheer and wit:

"You think that it is our soldiers who are returning? Well, I do not," and she sucked in a corner of her mouth, tigerishly, "— not just yet!"

The ladies of an epicerie, where I bought a hare paté to take to the trenches, were in the shrugging mood of resignation, desperate only on mention of their friends' food supply. They told with a rattling humour and pride in their nerve,

how they had hidden in cellars, shifted for themselves during the somewhat comic bombardment of October. Like all, they had parents, husbands, in their beloved land across the awful news-effacing lines of battle. Months had separated them, death seemed the likeliest portion of the absent, yet they ill concealed an envy of them. They gave me addresses of sisters, brothers, begged me to intercede with my German hosts to let them send letters. When I did, the officers laughed.

In the cafés you encountered domino-playing business men, who thawed on hearing you speak, as they would say, "without a German accent." A hat-dealer with a paunch and blond moustache, was quite settled down to the situation, "temporaire" he said, and took a strategic interest in the shifting scenes of fighting. He drew a worn map from his pocket to point out the towns from Nieuport south, through Ypres, Armentières, Peronne, Lens, Arras, and told them off as "Anglais," "Français," or "ne sais pas." He dwelt upon the protean marvel that in an hour any one could walk from Lille straight into trench or artillery duel. He was far more interested that in the bombardment 1,200 houses and 300 million francs in property had been destroyed, than that folks should be starving — heartless bourgeois with a well-stocked cellar that he was.

The pale, snub-nosed lady at a friseur's where I

bought soap had last seen her son when he mobilised on August 2d, her husband when his "year" was listed and he went to Tours in September. Not a word from either since. The invariable story. What could one say, what sort of hope hold out? What to conjecture that she had not a thousand times passionately rehearsed, or that spoken by an alien would not sound banal and hollow?

"It is sad for you," I stumbled.

"Naturally!" she exclaimed with the first fierceness in our talk. And as we discussed the chances of her people's retaking Lille, she kept repeating with eloquent intonations and as if slightly dazed — "Enfin . . . Et enfin! . . . Enfin?"

A tobacconist's wife set her mouth and hinted dramatically of civil mutiny, if things continued as they were. The women of France, said she, had before saved its liberties with knife and bloodshed.

The girls in a droguerie where I was telephoning gave the one ray of cheer. One of them boldly wore the dull bronze arms from an English soldier's cap. "Ah! Les Anglais," her brown eyes glittered, and by the deep sigh she heaved, I knew that she was thinking less of their military worth than of one Tommy who had owned the token on her breast.

The local newspaper published, *Sous le controle de l'autorité allemande,* was edited by a Madame Tersaud. Its articles ranged from discussing laisser-passer regulations to "La Question du Pain," which concerned the German persecution by which the people had to eat rye bread, historically scorned in wheat-nourished France. But you could also find in it, to show how life was not changed altogether and that the French cannot lose their unconscious gift of making us barbarians smile, this notice:

Chien perdu. Il a été perdu un chien tigré répondant au nom de Phillipe, le ramener Rue de Long-Pot. Récompense.

Another sought a gentleman escaped from a local insane asylum, and thought to be at large between the lines. It suggested that scene in Ibsen's "Peer Gynt," where the keepers of the madhouse are kept in cages and the lunatics set free.

It was a relief to quit Lille and visit the invaders at their best, at their outlying messes or in the trenches. The courtyard of your hotel roared with chugging motors just before daylight, exactly as had been at Przemysl. It was the safest time to shift reliefs, and a car skimmed you under the dawn moon and through showers upon winter wheat fields, among the towns around Arras, wrecked with a relentless finality that only Servia

can match. You reached a trench, passing through shell-torn wall after wall of houses in the ghastly village of Tilloy. Here one fellow with a tiny mouth and puckered moustache peered from his cave, by a home-made periscope of mirrors tilted in a square wooden chute, to grasp my hand and confide, "My mutter iss in Los Angeles," when told I was an American. Or in field-hospitals you saw pictures of the Kaiser signed in mimeograph being distributed, held in motionless hands and stared at with a mute groping of the senses. In the abbey farmyard of Vis-en-Artois, 18-year-old Saxon recruits were at drill, none more than five feet tall, showing the straits to which even inexhaustible Germany has been reduced.

At table with officers in the châteaux, one might have been at home in one of our Army or Navy messes. The war to them had become routine. You thought to be at the throbbing core of field opinion on the conflict, to find talk of its strategy or emotions taboo. Instead, you heard the personal banter of any such trained men at their tasks in peace times; gossip of their English, French, American friends of yore, an incurious noting of the time elapsed since receiving letters from them, eulogies to the delights of London or Paris. You were lucky if you could so far extract a comment such as: "We only hate the English for having caused the war, which we did not

want." True or not, falsely promoted by the Foreign Office or no, this idea is held sincerely throughout Germany. But personal venom, vituperation, is always beneath professional fighters.

At one headquarters where we saw an artillery duel from a roof, I sat at dinner next an abrupt, honest Prussian. A type, he, with his long thin nose and blue coat. It was a Bavarian mess — Bavarians are simply Irishmen brought up on beer — and he was being ragged as an outsider.

"Yes, I am from Berlin," he winked at me. "And of the crême de la crême there."

His tormentor was one of the four present, who, as the press-bureau man along awedly confided to me, had "enough quarterings to marry royalty."

"He is our komiker," said the officer opposite.

But to me the komiker grew suddenly serious. "We have to talk so," he confided simply, "in order to, how do you say in English —?"

"Keep up your spirits?" I hazarded.

"Yes." His eyes dropped. In a moment he excused himself, to go up stairs. "I must finish my night's work," he said.

The unquestioned simplicity and candour of the Prussian is mystifying, as to its source in real initiative of thought, or in following standard military verdicts. Take the question always uppermost to a stranger, of how long the war will last

and how it will end. The average officer's answer is ever the same: In the spring, when Russia will quit, sick of prisoners lost and unable to get more ammunition and arms, so that we can concentrate troops on the French front. But next day you meet the fellow who swears with even deeper conviction that Russia will never give up. "Arms and guns?" laughs he. "She can manufacture all she wants. Who wins the war depends on which nation's money holds out the longest, and Germany has the most."

A neutral profits nothing by arguing with partisans. You dodge quoting the Allies' figures, naturally, and that Germany has merely so far subscribed the most gold for her war.

But candour may overreach itself, letting the wish father the thought, as in the case of the dumdum exhibit gleefully made to us in one headquarters. You learn to sidestep such charges, together with "atrocities" and the real neutrality of Belgium business. Only ex-parte evidence is sought to support cruelties, for which reliable eyewitnesses cannot exist, and the real facts of political matters are always deliberately withheld. Bullets with aluminum caps easily ripped off were shown us, together with a rifle which had a device apparently for that. But I recognised the gun as a model out of date in the British service, and formerly made for use in the tropics only; also,

that the attachment was primarily a cut-off to transform the rifle from a magazine into a single shot arm, yet which could snap a bullet to be soft-nosed for shooting game. The absurdity, in the rapid fire of warfare, of employing it to make dumdums, since seconds would be used to transform each shell, quite condemned it for that purpose. I further knew that many English colonial troops had come into the field with whatever equipment they could muster.

Had any one present seen a soldier using that gun? No. Was the rifle taken from men actually fighting? Well, they were captured "by the thousand," and hundreds of affidavits existed, of photographs taken in hospitals, showing the effect of soft-nosed bullets. A steel one ricocheting or at very close range may tear the flesh in the same manner. I form no opinion, though knowing that leaden bullets have always been regulation for the side-arms of British bicycle scouts.

But Prussian simplicity came under no such doubt when we were taken inside the mediæval fortress of Lille — worthless now but a miracle of strength and architecture in Louis XIV's day — and paraded before Indian prisoners. There were three turbaned sheiks, two Rajputs, and one Brahmin. We could not speak to them, nor they to us, for the English officer uses native languages to his men. Their silence was implacable, ter-

rible. Between us and the German showmen in their elegant grey cloaks and varnished boots, they in khaki, puttees, and turbans distinguished not the least. You could sense their conscious superiority, their inner oriental thought, holding us all men of Chandala, as we stood in the cold drizzle of the North staring at them behind those bars. I found myself estimating how loyal to their lost officers they must be, how they despised their keepers, whose glee was childish in this show maintained to score the baseness of pitting brown men against white. You felt the callousness of the Teuton, his inability to put himself in the place of other peoples, to see through any eyes except his own, which is the secret of his incessant lapses in diplomacy.

The same crudity was impressive on the old King of Bavaria's birthday, at its celebration to which we were led in a great square of the city. It was a grand review before the Crown Prince, a very orgy of goose-stepping, of massed troops singing old German war songs, as they filed past officers at stiff attention, wasp-waisted like dancing masters. Rank after rank of simple peasant faces, utterly blank with homage in democratic eyes, turned jerkily to face them, like the wooden automata of some vast mechanical toy. I turned to look behind, to see how many Lilleois had gathered to witness this paradigm of power and

aristocracy. Hardly one. Only a crowd of gamins lined the square, staring as at some novel circus parade. The adults and especially all women remained behind the closed doors of shop or home.

The " fall " of Lille had, as I have hinted, its diverting side. For the man-in-the-street, indeed, the occupation of a city by an invading army in this war is like nothing more than the advent of Knights of Pythias to their convention town. But with this difference: the military guests have to supply their own flags and decorations. Here the so-called bombardment lasted off and on between the 10th and 12th of October, though operations began about the 4th, when the English troops withdrew, leaving some 3,000 French, mostly Africans, in the city and suburbs. For a week the authorities wavered as to whether Lille was an open or a closed town, could or could not be bombarded. Daily, detachments of Uhlans galloped about, fearlessly hitching their horses outside the French headquarters, as they went in to receive contradictory or equivocal answers. The French cavalry always managed to miss the enemy; one force would turn the end of a street just as the other entered it. Once two foot detachments, each scurrying out of town by trains — still running, mind — met at the ticket-office in the railway station, for a fray and slaughter.

" Out in my suburb," the American manager of

the harvester factory told me, "all I was scared about was being caught between two gangs chasing each other around. Made me sort of nervous, that, and to see coon officers on horseback drawing guns."

Lille was finally declared closed. The bombardment began one Sunday night, and though the Germans passed the word that it would cease in the morning, firing continued all Monday. Exactly one civilian was killed.

And to-day in Brussels, as I started by saying, life is no more punctilious. Near daylight this morning, in the King of Spain bar, I was listening to two youths as they drank Scotch whisky. One was a German under-officer, the other a Belgian private, who, a straggler from the defense of Antwerp had since been rusticating in civilian clothes.

"To-morrow I leave to join my regiment in France," I heard the Belgian confide.

"Ach!" said the German, "but how can you?"

"It is easy enough. I have an American passport, of course, such as any one can get. It will take me across the Dutch frontier. I go by steamer to Folkestone and thence to Havre."

"Good-luck to you. Pros't! And may we meet as happily, some day, on the firing-line." Laughing, they slapped one another on the back.

Here the one flavour of war or conquest you

can get is to whisper "Sabotage!" when dining with officers, and the Belgian waiter is slow in bringing your oysters. And yesterday, at Liège, our good General Staff hosts themselves finally tumbled to the joke of our junket. Surrounded by what history is making the most famous forts in the world, we were whisked away to view — a thirteenth-century church portico in a village called Huy.

Whew!

PART V

WITH THE RUSSIANS IN BUKOWINA

I

A DEAD CENTRE OF WAR

Novo Sliatsa. Bessarabia (Russia), February 19.— Three days spent with Cossacks on the job, at their midwinter fighting around Czernowitz, as I retreated with them through Bukowina, now make the climax of such adventures as entering the city between Russian evacuation and Austrian occupation, much as one plunges into the uncanny dead-centre of a typhoon, and crossing between the two enemies' lines by a burned pontoon bridge on the River Pruth. And I had the friendship during battle of no less a character than the "notorious" Shechin, Captain of Hussars, the "bandit of the first rank," as he is called in Austria, who for three months held all Bukowina with a handful of men; who loves life, hates no one, and regards his feats as something of a tremendous joke.

Neutral Rumania, with Czernowitz in striking-distance of her northern tip, made these risks possible. Hats off to her for that, though her attitude toward joining the war, like a crow waiting to pounce down upon spoils won by others, makes hard any sympathy for her chocolate sol-

diers, who want Transylvania without fighting for it.

In a nutshell, the Bukowina campaign is pivotal because if the Russians hold it Rumania probably will join them; if not, she won't — this, aside from Rumania's ever ready me-too to any jump by her big brother, Italy. Hence the feverish Austrian effort to win back the province, the absurd official exaggeration of the numbers fighting and lost on both sides there. But I have tales more human and colourful than politics or strategy.

Dl. Také Jonescu, ex-Premier of Rumania, a greyish plump man of Macedonian blood, far too wise and able for his country, gave the decisive cue one day in Bucharest to a young American named Curtin, and myself. At present I am barred from following the Austrian army for having shown sympathy for Servia in these letters; my veracity has not been questioned for what I reported there and in Slavonia; but in the flattering phrase of the German Foreign Office: "Ihre Artikel sind nicht freundschaftlich genug."

I got the forbidding wire as I was leaving the Balkan capital for a promised German Staff expedition to von Hindenburg and Poland. And Russian army rules against reporters are as ironclad as England's; while Rumania, famed always as the "tightest" country in Europe toward for-

eigners, had her Bukowina frontier locked like the German jaw on Belgium.

"But visit the Russian Legation," suggested Dl. Jonescu. "I think the Minister will get you permission from the Governor of Czernowitz to go there. In that case, our police would let you pass the frontier."

If true, it meant a chance to see fighting, could we strike battle lines beyond the two border towns of Mihaleni or Mamornitza. The Russian Minister the same day left mysteriously for Petrograd, but his Chargé d'Affaires promised to wire the Bukowina capital, and assured Curtin and me — how guilessly I do not know, for the Governor was then probably decamping for this filthy town — that the request should be granted. But this would take four days. They yielded nothing.

Finally, last Monday night, with no credentials beyond passports, we held up both Dl. Panaitescu, head of the Rumanian secret police, and our own Legation, at the point of the pencil, as it were; the first we tackled on the plea that Russian permission was on the way, wherefore the police chief wired the two said towns to let us pass, and our own Minister wrote a paper empowering us to investigate Americans in Czernowitz and vicinity. It was in English, which no patrol of either army had a chance of understanding; but red seals stamped with the American Eagle work wonders,

no matter how reasonlessly, and it bore one. Thus next noon found us twisting on a jerkwater line three hundred miles north of the devilish "little Paris" that Bucharest thinks it is, across the snowy hills of Moldavia, into the terminal town of Dorohoi.

Typical of strangers' treatment in Rumania was our greeting there. As we drove up from the station, a dolled-up soldier burst out of his sentry box to gesticulate that we must visit the prefect of police at once. Before we could reach his office, a peasant in round black cap and sheepskins hové out of a café brandishing a whip, to air his knowledge of German to the same effect. But we won the local official.

The question then was whether to choose Mihaleni or Mamornitza to enter Bukowina. We wanted to strike Russian, not Austrian troops; and to calculate how far across the Sereth River the latter were was beyond my strategy, knowing the customs of Austrian officers and being ignorant of the number of coffee-houses in the province. Finally the prefect banged a fist on his desk and averred "officially" that they were opposite the former town; so we cast the die for Mamornitza, on the Pruth, some 25 kilometres east of Czernowitz itself, and began the voyage thither in a sea-going hack drawn by four ponies hitched abreast, like a circus chariot-race.

Forty-four kilometres was the distance, over glittering fields where the maize stubble was reappearing under the sun of that first February day when you feel the backbone of winter broken. It was through a land of high-thatched huts, queerly Japanese, except that their walls of mud smoothed over wattle and painted blue all had sagged askew. Yet it was a clean land of security and peace, in pitiful contrast to the war-branded homes in store for us across the border; a land where the folk drank wine from the Danube vineyards, and Spitz-tailed dogs and mottled pigs drowsed on the door-steps.

Down a long hill into the wide Pruth valley, with the white, eye-aching horizons of Russia ahead; a long turn west up the river, and at last the hovels of Mamornitza, where horizontal frontier poles, as at a railway crossing, barred the road. First Rumania's, striped red, yellow, and blue; then a rickety wooden bridge over a creek, and the like Austrian barber-pole effect, in black and orange. A rod back of each in their respective countries, pretentious stucco custom houses dominated the frozen muck. Peasants with loaded sleds and hand-carts, or back-packing grain sacks, crowded both sides of the Rumanian barrier. But for us the burning matter was, Who guarded the black and orange pole? There the striped sentry-box gaped empty. Not a soul visible in the

Austrian village, and over the sign "K. u. k. Zollamt" on the Imperial building, windows were smashed, our first hint of the world war in this remote corner of the East.

"No one has been there for a week," a flat-nosed, swarthy soldier, rifle in hand, told us in German. "Three days ago two Cossacks burnt and looted the hotel." And he continued humming the tune that we had interrupted, which, by heaven knows what cosmic linking, was "Under the Bamboo Tree."

We paid our driver and made for the Rumanian custom house. The commissioner, true to national habit, was away somewhere, but might return in an hour, two hours, or next morning. So said his moustached and dapper clerk, as he penned under a lamp a lengthy paper, which he called a "dossier," indicting a sloe-eyed youngster for smuggling contraband — sugar, if I remember. The chief had orders to let us pass the frontier, but we must see him first. There would be a poker game that night with the quarantine doctor, and we were welcome. We waited, two, three, infuriating hours. At last we floundered in the darkness up the road and banged on the door of the first lighted hut, to demand a lodging.

It was no inn, but a stout woman in an embroidered waist cooked us eggs, produced *vin alba*

to drink, and let us sleep on sofas in a back room, after she had shooed out the card and drinking party of a fat colonel in a white astrakan cap, a girl in black with gipsy earrings, and a pock-marked refugee from Czernowitz. He had kept a restaurant there, and foretold fearsomely a battle all about us for next morning or the day after. The Russians still held Czernowitz, he said, but Austrian Uhlans had been seen that afternoon in Mologhia, ten kilometres south from the road to the city that we should follow. Waking in the night, I kept hearing remote sounds from across the Pruth, but foolishly failed to read their meaning then: barking dogs, the distant creak and rattle of heavy axletrees. Some rooster with a very dissipated crow brought a wan day of drifting snowflakes, and with it the resolve over our hostess's coffee to defy the dapper customs clerk, flout the barber-poles, even swim the boundary creek, if his boss had not returned and the guards kept us from crossing.

Then I put all the money I had into my shoes, and never was I afterwards so ashamed of a precaution. But all through the eastern war scene, until you know it well, persists the sworn rumour that Cossacks met in the field invariably rob you. And Cossacks, or Uhlans, we pledged ourselves to meet, hunt them up, or bust, that day.

We routed the clerk from his bunk, who stirred

up the returned commissioner. That person was snoring, with a black fur cap on his round gipsy face, and grunted for us to wait half an hour, till we cut in with some strong German and a few English cuss-words. At that he waved an arm to the soldier dogging us, who, outside in the road, let us duck under his barber-pole. The Austrian one we vaulted — foot-free, at length, between the lines in a snowstorm, having no food nor any scrap of paper to justify our presence with either army.

I got the first thrill of the many to come. Instantly, in the swirling flakes that veiled the deserted houses, all windowless, many burnt ruins, even Rumania seemed far away as home, say. One felt the chances ten to one of never getting back across the boundary here, if either army closed about us; and the police chief, Panaitescu, had dodged all responsibility of assuring a return to his country by any route. It was not my first still-hunt for the clash of arms in the war, but the most exciting this, without question. I thanked my stars that young Curtin with me was a Yankee, the lean, keen, resourceful sort, that will play the game wherever his head may rest at dark.

"We'll hit something — bound to," he panted, as we topped the long hill, free finally of any dwellings.

At first and for nearly an hour no being blurred the utter white and snowy fields so vaguely discernible. Not a sound while we plunged on westward, straining eyes for any moving shade of peasant, horseman, uniform, against the ever-dark line of such a close horizon. Dimly behind rose the hills of the frontier; ahead, hazy woods. It was after eight o'clock when life began stirring. A peasant woman in a white cotton hood and a skirt of sacking, a basket on her arm, crossed the road, heading south before we could accost her, by a faint track in the very direction of Mologhia. Then came a rheumy-eyed old man, hobbling toward Mamornitza on a cane. He spoke only Rumanian. A farm and haystacks loomed out; next, clattering up behind, for the road was drifted bare of snow, a cart driven by two shaggy peasants and loaded with sacks — meal or contraband, likely — passed by our lazy frontier friends. Soon this seemed the road's great activity; empty sleds and V-sided little wagons flocked toward Mamornitza. We stopped and questioned each. The hooded occupants were unanimous.

"The Russians have gone back from Czernowitz," they said (Die Rüssen sind zurück gegangen) and excitedly, but in peasants' mere awe of change, neither with joy nor regret. "But Cossack patrols are still in the city."

So. We seemed hitting things just right. We

hurried on, seeing farther to the south now, for the storm was thinning. But mile after mile we went, and never an Austrian uniform. It became the old, discouraging game of chasing a battle. Even the crows felt fooled and cheated, holding indignation meetings in every tree. Down a long hill, crested with old trenches now empty, we found the village of Ostritza, and invaded a thatched hut full of Rumanians. It was washing day inside. Three swarthy women stood over steaming tubs and agreed to cook us eggs, while the head of the house hitched up a low sledge for our last lap to the city.

"We have been robbed, of course," they said, nerveless, unapprehensive, cheerful, in the way of all peasants in a war-wracked land. "Yes, by the soldiers of both armies."

"But we are living still, mother," sighed a dark young girl with a bracelet. "It will be all right. No one is starving."

And as we ate, fishing rock-salt from a huge sack, a grey cat dozed on atop the square mud stove, unconcerned as the hens outside — all over Europe hens are the real heroes, still impartially productive in the sweep of armies. And we paid but 60 heller (12 cents) for our half-dozen eggs; five crowns for the sled.

Then outside in the sled, and the old man lashing his bony bay horse, we climbed out of the

valley. Once more bleak uplands, occasionally a roadside cross with a tiny peaked roof, and the storm whipping up to a blizzard. Towards eleven, by the increasing huts and laden wagons headed with us, we knew we approached the city's outskirts. Children, women in huge felt boots and rawhide coats, but never more than white cotton hoods on their heads, trudged beside their household gods. Refugees returning, of German blood by their square pink faces, the father of each family at our inquiries would wave no more than a joyous arm to assure that the invaders had gone. We gave up hope of meeting any soldiers. The houses became citified, corniced, with big lintels over the double windows in the Galician fashion, and Russische Gasse (Russian Street) lettered on the corner ones. Bearded Jews in long coats and wide black hats loitered on the curbs, and we knew that we were in the city.

But slowly this approach to Czernowitz changed its character. Not before in the war had I run into a phase that grew so in foreboding. Now for memorable hours we encountered not a single uniform, nor local official, even of police. After three months, an alien invader suddenly had left the population, dazed, gaping, leaderless. Whatever the truth of brutalities — always impossible to verify — preceding so unique a state, strangers like us knew that we had to deal with

all the inertia of ignorance and passion in the most polyglot of peoples, among whom suspicion of espionage came first and strongest. Customarily, according to report, in reoccupying an Austrian town, the civil population points out to the entering troops suspected spies, or any persons it may have a grudge against, as a means of getting solid with the military, and they are dealt with — summarily.

The street pitched down hill, over a railway line entering from the south. Kosher signs appeared on the walls; many windows were broken, some shops looted, but most were tight closed behind fluted iron shutters. Idle citizens eyed us, so conspicuous with our queer sledge, and we heard muttered comments. A pole stretched from walk to walk barred the way, and a boy of fourteen came out of the tollhouse with a strip of paper for our driver. He wore a red Hungarian soldier's cap and said he had just returned to his post. Up another hill, now in the swarming heart of the city, and we scraped over cobbles into the main square, across which we spotted the Schwartzen Adler Hotel, and made for it, the strangest outfit, with my brown sleeping-bag our only luggage, that could have stopped there lately.

In the open here it was market-day. Crowds of peasants, mostly Ruthenian and Rumanian women, kept up a low, gossiping murmur that yet

in its sum had the quality of a roar, over their baskets and sacks, chiefly of cabbages and apples, which the throngs mingling among them were all too expectant and preoccupied to buy. The great pinkish Stadthaus had its high steps and arched porticos crowded with important-looking citizens that we carefully avoided. It filled the south side of the square. Behind the railing on its high, round tower and under a golden, emblematic globe, a lookout in a yellow slicker paced restlessly, peering through a spyglass for the expected Uhlans. Down over the entrance still hung the white, blue, red flag of Russia, which no one yet seemed to have the nerve to pull down.

In the hotel we hunted up the porter, a mannikin with a wispy beard and no chin. It was the usual down-at-heel Galician hostelry; huge rooms and lofty ceilings, filthy, with tracked mud deep on the stair carpets. "What use to keep it clean," shrugged the porter, "when it was full of riotous, brutal Russians?" Their officers' names still were chalked on the blackboard in the office. We ordered a fire in the high porcelain stove, hot water, and a barber to be sent up to shave us. It was our first breathing space, and waiting, we began, after hardly speaking for hours, to discuss and compare the plans and apprehensions crowding both our minds.

Maybe the utter desertion of the hotel, the

restive hum of throngs under our windows, the peering citizens gathered on each doorstep, got at our nerves. Simultaneously one fact annoyed us — that though not even a Russian patrol was left in the city, that flag still waved from the town-hall.

"If some one doesn't climb up and haul it down soon, I'll do it myself," burst out Curtin at the window. "Think of a German flag being left like that in a French or English town. Why, the citizens would be fighting to tear it away."

Now and then beyond the market a red trolley car slid by through the driving snow. The porter came with water, filled and lit the stove, for the first time eyeing us with concern.

"Not a citizen dared go outdoors after dark last night, for fear of being shot while the Russians were going away," he told us. "They ordered every one to stay indoors. Looted all the stores. Took a hundred women and children for hostages. Stole everything from that jeweller's there on the corner —" and he slipped away suddenly. The fellow suspected us. He kept walking up and down outside our door.

I was shaving. Here at the heart of the surrounding conflict, in the calm dead-centre of the tornado, the stagnation was making me uncomfortable.

"I'd like to see a uniform!" I cried, "Austrian or Russian, no matter. Soldiers are always reasonable enough, whatever they may imagine about you. Give me the Austrians, rather than a mob like that one outside, after what it's been through, and without any head at all."

"And have some Jew," grinned Curtin, "to make a hit with an officer, point us out as spies, so we get shot."

At last the barber came with his kit, a yellow, lean man, and the one being of our four hours in Czernowitz who really seemed to believe us when we told him that we were reporters, with authority to relieve Americans.

"When are the Austrians expected?" we demanded, as we had from both the porter and the proprietor, a stout man with a drooping moustache, glimpsed down in the office. "Doesn't any one know? Hasn't any word come from them — can't they see anything from that tower?"

I opened the window to catch the first clatter of Uhlans' hoofs on the cobbles, if they should come sweeping into the square.

"In an hour or two, they say," said the barber, at work on Curtin. "Some think any minute. They had a patrol in the western part of the city early this morning."

"That d—d flag there, yet," I broke out.

"Yes. No one dares to touch it. They're keeping the honour of hauling it down for the Austrian commander."

"That's these people for you, isn't it?" exclaimed Curtin. "Afraid to breathe without official sanction."

Once in our chat, the friendly barber remarked that he had a niece in town who was "married to an American." An inspiration seized us.

"Send her around," I said. "We might as well get some action out of the red seal on our Minister's paper."

"We'll open a relief office," said Curtin. "Declare this room our headquarters, and our hours"— glancing at the clock —"12 to 12:30 this afternoon." Then in German, for the barber spoke no English, we recklessly told him to spread it through the city for all Americans in need of help to call on us.

II

RUNNING THE LINES FROM CZERNOWITZ

It was nearly noon, and we were hungry. The barber refused to take any money. The Russians, he said, had never paid him, and he seemed not to have recovered from the daze of their rule. All the time at the window, watching and listening, I had been making up my mind.

"We started out to see the Cossacks," I said, "so let's do it. Stick around here till the last minute, when we hear the Austrians coming, and then make a quick exit, across the river to the north bank, and hunt up the Russian army."

"Hire one of those hacks," said Curtin, pointing to a line of them below, "and by the hour, so we can light out on the jump. Let's get one now, and keep it while we're at luncheon, eh?"

We piled downstairs, brushing by the lurking porter, and dickered with a young tow-headed driver, who had one grinning tooth. Of course, the gaping crowd gathered about, but once inside the hack, we pulled the cover down tight. We were to pay the fellow three crowns an hour, and ordered him to take us to the best restaurant in town. Off we clattered through the dirty, shut-

tered streets, on which not another wheel was moving; and as we twisted among the heavy, stucco buildings — here and there a new store or coffee-house in the Egyptian-like architecture of Vienna — heads thrust under the carriage top and studied us insolently. Still, with each moment our excitement and elation grew. Opening an American relief office between the lines. Nothing in get-rich-quick fiction quite equalled that!

The restaurant, on a steep side street, was small and jammed with stout German-chattering shopkeepers, noisily eating soup and mishandling their forks. We asked the driver in, had him fed at another table, and over our own boiled pork and kraut — beer, too, and all cheap enough — discreetly talked no English. The guests, as if jaded by successive occupations of their city, were calmly swapping wild tales of 20,000 Russians having been made prisoners, and of a Rumanian patrol near the border that had fired on German troops.

In half an hour, we were back in our "office," escorted by the gum-shoe porter, to face four "clients," two women and two men. And from now, whether through the porter's activity, the suspicious crowds, or our announcement sent broadcast by the barber, we had not a moment's peace. We made a great show of taking notes on each case, but every instant were interrupted by a bang

on the door. First the porter to have us write our names and biography, according to police regulations, then the stout proprietor to make us do it all over again, on more exacting printed forms. And after our record as "American Relief Committee" (in English), we each honestly added, "auch Kriegsvertreter."

"That'll mystify any Austrian general," said Curtin. "They'll never reconcile a relief job with a reporter dog. Think us spies when they see it, sure."

Came the porter again, with a message from the toothless driver; where we wanted to go and when we were going to pay him?

Our delegation comprised a cross-eyed young woman, an old man with frizzled hair who produced for identification no more than his declaration of intention for citizenship, a grinning, garrulous fellow in a sort of smock, and a full-lipped, dark lady with a tragic mien, the barber's niece. She alone had the only lien on our flag — no passport, of course, but a letter from the Vienna Embassy, into whose bailiwick we really were butting, and a New York Health Department birth certificate of one of her three children. For two others, she had a Department paper denying that the city had any record of their birth. Her name was Fischer, she said that her husband lived on Essex Street, New York, and she wanted to get

to him. Had plenty of money in the bank, but the Austrians would let her draw only 200 crowns ($40) a month. Wanted to reach Vienna, and see the Embassy, but we advised her to write there, now that communication would be open, and save railway fare.

"Ah, do you think so?" she shook her head, bitterly. "I had better go while I can, for the Russians will be back here, soon enough."

The others may have come to spy on us, but they seemed chiefly anxious to know if any ships were sailing to America, facts the German countries deny to possible emigrants. We reassured them. The talkative man merely wanted to get back to Chicago, where he had been a plumber's helper.

No sooner were they gone than the tow-headed driver himself bounded into the room. Taking Curtin aside, he whispered to him in German, with an air of treacherously plotting with us —

"Only tell me the truth. It's all right. Where do you really want to go? I'll take you there." It was now nearly three o'clock.

"This is getting fierce," I said. "If we're going to cross the lines to the Russians, let's start our get-away now, anyhow."

Instantly we agreed on the move, cast the die. The one difficulty lay in my blanket-bag, for we had hired the room for the night. To decamp

with it now, paying for the room, might add the last straw to the hotel's suspicions. To sneak away dodging our bill was alluring but impossible. We managed to steal downstairs, avoiding the porter, and the moustached proprietor actually swallowed our story that we might be back that night, or might not; and charged us two crowns for the use of our "office," to date.

In the square, most of the market women had made away with their goods. As the seedy loiterers surrounded us, you could see a great stir around the Stadthaus, men running up and down the steps, the lookout on the tower gone from his post, but all without exclamation or sound over the snow.

"Hark!" cried Curtin, bracing rigid as we jumped into the hack.

It was the climax of our long tension, the final break in the uncanny calm at this dead-centre of war.

Distinctly from up the square we heard clattering hoofs, confused exclamations, one falsetto shout.

"Here they come," I said. "Drive like the devil!"

"*Wo — wohin?*" demanded single-tooth, hoarsely, ducking his head under the hood.

"Down to the river. Across the bridge. *The Austrians!*"

For an instant he stared at us, stonily. My heart rose to my mouth. Then he lashed up his horses.

I had hardly noticed all the faces thrust under the hack cover. But at my last words they nodded, began a babel of talk, and as we dashed away hands were thrust out toward the reins.

But we eluded them, swaying and bumping around three or four corners, keeping ourselves hidden. Then suddenly the driver pulled up, and we looked out into a deserted side street. Up went the hood again, and that sly face once more confronted us:

"The bridge is blown up. No one can cross the Pruth."

"Why the devil didn't he tell us?" said Curtin. "It looks like a plant."

"You want to go to the Russians?" croaked the fellow, as if he were suggesting murder. "I'll take you there."

"How? Where?"

"There's another bridge they forgot. Ten kilometres away," he pointed east with his whip. "At Ostritza."

"The place we passed through this morning," I remembered. "I think it's a blind, to drive us into the Austrians."

"And we'd be certain now to meet them, on the way there," said Curtin.

"Let's take a look here, anyhow," I compromised; and to the driver — "The railway bridge, that we started for. And *schnell! schnell!*"

He obeyed. We rattled on down the hill, swinging left (west). It seemed miles, past the big deserted railway station, where the orange and black letter-boxes by the entrances were mashed and split open. At length, reaching a long level, the houses thinned; broken fences gave upon unkempt flats, with the River Pruth, half frozen, flowing through them. We stopped at such a gap and got out, to be instantly surrounded by a mob, but mostly of youths.

The blizzard had changed into a drizzle. From here two bridges at once were visible, both great structures of arched black girders, with two segments in each blown up and drooping into the river. Furthest, and on the right, the railway bridge, untouched after it had first been wrecked, by the retreating Austrians in November, probably. But the road bridge close by was veiled in a crackling, eddying cloud of smoke. It had been repaired with wooden trestlings, which the Russians had fired and were still burning. Then, between them, we sighted what made our spirits leap — a low bridge of pontoons, which for a distance, at least, through the ice, seemed intact.

We made for it, followed by the crowd, ques-

tioning them. A rowdy with a cast in his eye made himself spokesman. The Russians had soaked the structure with petrol, but the river had put it out. Standing where it began, you could see that, as it wriggled out, flat and close on the ice and water, to an open space both sides of which were charred and black. For some ten feet between them the chill current leaped and foamed. Could we get across? Planks a-plenty were lying about. Who was on the other side of the river?

"Kossaken, Kossaken!" answered the crowd, with exclamations of "Schiessen," and pantomime. And if they didn't shoot us, said the crooked-eye youth—"You will be sent to Siberia." It was no use to laugh.

"The Cossacks are right behind that house," chimed in another, pointing to a burned building between the far end of the pontoon and the road bridge. "We have thrown cartridges into the burning trestle, which explode and bring them out to peer at us through their glasses."

We hesitated. It was something of a moment. With the Austrians in the city, to cross the river, even could we make it, would be risking the always dangerous and forbidden act in war of passing between enemies. The best we could be sure of, with our lack of proper papers, and the chances all against any Cossacks being able to read, was to be hailed and arrested by the first sentry. But we

debated nothing. Dragging the gang back to the carriage, our idea seemed mutual to reconnoitre a bit. We made the toothless one drive us up the hill above the road bridge. And from there, looking down on the straggling, one-story, tin-roofed shacks of the far bank, not a human being was visible.

As a fact, my mind had long been made up. And if Curtin's wasn't, it took only a word to win him. Our sworn job was chasing the Russians, and what with all our relief self-advertisement at the Schwarzen Adler, and the whole market-place thinking us spies, we were in too deep and too bad to face any Austrians fighting back to their city after its months in " barbarian " bondage. Never had any place so got on my nerves as Czernowitz, nor made me so feel the dread and apprehension of angry, irresponsible crowds.

" By Heaven, I'm going to cross her," I said. " This town's becoming the limit."

" Go you," said Curtin, wiping his eye-glasses. " I'm game."

We were hardly an instant too soon. Back at the pontoon, some idea of our purpose must have seeped up-town, for down the road was coming a man in a queer whitish coat with a meal-sack on his back, who joined us, pointing to the planks. Then all at once a shout up the street, and I sighted four horsemen cross it, and disappear. I

was paying one-tooth, and he was holding out for an additional hour's charge — a bold scheme to delay us, to be sure. He doggedly kept repeating over, "Drei und halb Stunden," which at least fixed the time in my mind. I thrust nine crowns at him, to take or leave, and left him growling and shaking his fist. Mine was trembling. I ran to join Curtin, bending over the planks in the smoke and sparks of the burning trestles.

It took but a minute to lay the boards. We balanced over the ugly, icy riffle — across. But it was still fifty yards to where the ice met the shore. We let the man with the white sack, plainly a native going home, lead. One of the kids, too, from the crowd had joined us, the while it thronged the bank, vague through the smoke, awed and silently gaping.

That fifty yards. It was one of those rare, crowded eras of living which strips existence of your last vanity.

"Thank the sense you had," muttered Curtin, "to stow that cash in your heel."

I recollect that I was puzzling why we were not also literally burning our bridges behind us. Only, the wrong bridge was burning, and we had not set it.

We stepped off upon frozen, crackling grass. Gaps in the lone wall of the burned house ahead, up the rise, were darkened by some invisible, mov-

ing figure. To reach the road, you had to climb a steep bank on the left. It was a hard, icy scramble, and half way up I slipped and fell. Recovering myself, I seized the fence rails and crawled between them, at last to stand upright before the deserted, down-at-heel village. A man filled what had been a doorway of the house, a dark face under a shaggy shako, a carbine on his shoulder, straps crossed diagonally on his chest, with big leather knee-boots under the skirt of his brown coat

A Cossack sentry, on duty.

Immediately, he turned on his heel, showed his back, with a careless swing. He had seen us — but with his eyes alone — this first Russian soldier I had yet beheld in the field since the war.

Curtin and I looked at each other, breathing out hard. At any rate, we had passed him, were inside the Russian lines.

We had turned the trick.

III

IN THE HANDS OF COSSACKS

We kept on, as if walking on eggs, but chuckling to ourselves, not yet daring to talk. Chiefly I felt an immense sense of relief, of triumph. Any flushed, accusing Uhlan seemed far away now, as though armed trenches lay between us. As a fact, though we did not know it till later, the Austrians crossed the river hardly an hour behind us.

You felt that at least uniforms, disciplined authority, were at hand to appeal to in trouble. They still overawed the (to them) alien populace, we were no longer at its mercy in the matter of suspicion and charges of spying. In that, truly, we had a clean slate, and being with a retreating army would not compromise ourselves unless caught trying to return to Czernowitz (the last thing in our minds), but get the fair benefit of any doubt.

"Haven't felt so safe for hours," I said at last. "I'd trust any of these Cossacks, private or officer, quicker than an Austrian now. But no more lightning relief stunts for us."

Over the sack on the whitish man's back appeared a bunch of fine, long-tailed horses, bays and

dappled greys, waiting riderless in the middle of the street outside a tiny café. From the uniform raincoats on the saddles we judged them officers' mounts. Then walking towards us in close formation came a band of a dozen mounted men, Cossacks on patrol, our first sight of them at their famous job.

And extraordinary, impressive they were. Their huge conical hats were of all shades of shaggy wool, from snowy white, through grey astrakan, to black. The features beneath were full-lipped and swarthy, but at the same time white men's faces; terrible yet kindly, with a sort of tolerant lordliness and pride of life. They, too, passed hardly glancing aside at us. Likewise soon, galloping out of and down cross ways, others came riding, huge and lithe, with that same saddle-tight, not-rising ease that our West knows.

Not one but utterly ignored us. We were free from the uncanny dead-centre of conflict, but its stress was still far away.

A lame man emerged from a wicker gate, and tipped his hat to more. At first we too did so, but soon decided this was subservient, and thereafter always saluted instead. We entered an icy waste edged with warehouses, and the man with the sack kept stopping to talk with passersby. They would halt, mutter, and stare after us with a prying curiosity. Group after group thus; we

were becoming as marked as in Czernowitz — the folk informed by our companion, who may have known too much about us and invented more.

We were ahead now with the trudging youngster. In the middle of that open a dead man was lying flat on the ice. His cane, with a curved handle, lay behind him. He was a stout old fellow, in a ragged brown ulster and black sugarloaf hat, with the red still lingering in his cheeks, as if frozen there. There was blood on the snow and blood on his grey beard, but we could find no bullet-hole.

"Hemorrhage," I concluded. "Some sort of apoplexy."

"Couldn't have died of fright," said Curtin, "because he isn't a Jew."

Who would ever care, or could tell? Had he a wife, sons, a daughter? Where were they, and did they know? Any one that passed made a blind circuit around him. He was least of all our affair.

We crossed the railway track leading down the north bank of the Pruth (east) to the village of Boian, which we had guessed was the main point of the retreat, and toward this place in Russia. But first we kept on into the town of Sadagura, six kilometres from the river. In its small square gaped the same idle, restive crews as in the city, always so void of womankind.

"Let's hunt up a Cossack officer," I said, "and square ourselves. We'll feel more comfortable, and it'll be getting dark soon, with this country alive with excited patrols."

The kid returned my bundle, and paying him gathered a crowd. We chartered another one to show us the Cossacks' barracks, "In unser Kaiser's Kaserne," as he indignantly said, leading down a street to a great stone-walled enclosure full of low, military buildings that still bore the duplex eagles and orange and black of Austria; but with a Cossack at every gate. I aired my bad Russian to the first one, who directed us to a shop with broken windows opposite the next entrance, where we found an under-officer. We tried to show him our passports, to make him let us into a back room where his superiors could be heard talking; but he flatly refused, nor did our papers seem to interest him. Yet, obvious strangers that we were, he betrayed not the least suspicion. He wore a blue uniform, had a round, ruddy face, black moustache, and very arched eyebrows.

"But we want permission to go about with you," I said.

"How can you?" he answered, with a twinkle. "Because I am not going anywhere, but shall stay right here."

"Then we want to follow your army wherever it has marched."

"Travel where you please," he said, nonchalantly, waving a hand. "Cross over into Russia, if you wish. I don't care."

Amazed, we left him. From the spy-mad French and English, from the alert and rigorous Germans or Austrians of the front, such casual treatment would have been impossible. Back we went to the square to hire a vehicle to take us to Boian. A tall Jew, in brown gaiters, who dominated the throngs, told us none could be had, unless a peasant's cart from out in the country. He was the one citizen we had met who seemed reasonable, in his right mind, and he spotted us at once for Americans. A little boy doubtfully spoke up that he knew of a Jew who owned a carriage and two horses, and we credulously let him lead us through a long maze of filthy alleys to a hovel on the highroad coming in from the west.

But before we could rap on the door, it was slammed in our faces. We heard a great clatter of wheels and hoofs, and, looking up the road, beheld a long train of approaching artillery interspersed with Cossacks.

"They are afraid to come out," said our boy, motioning to the house, "while any troops are passing. Or to let you in."

"Why?" we demanded, sore enough, and banging on the door to no effect.

"I told you they were Jews," he said, cowedly, hanging his head. "They might be killed."

"Rot!"

We laughed at being fooled so. What chance had we to get a driver to take us into the heart of the Russian army, who would not even budge from his house as troops neared it?

"You must be a Jew, too," I said, "to have taken us here — for a tip." Which I gave him.

"It is so," the poor child murmured.

Through the tiny window, as twelve great guns laboured past in retreat — ammunition wagons loaded also with hay, the grey-coated, set-eyed drivers dozing on their seats — you could see shifting and furtive faces, the noses, *peikas,* of cringing men; glistening-eyed girls and women. Ranks of furry horsemen burst into a melancholy, humming chant. There was one Red Cross wagon. It was almost night already.

"Come on," I said, "our game's to follow them on foot. They'll lead us straight to headquarters."

We started after; but the column had outdistanced us by the time we reached the square again, though we thought that we could follow it from the wheel-tracks in the mud. By now every

youngster in Sadagura seemed to know that we were Americans, with heller to spend. They swarmed after us, and when one begged, affirming that he had a father in New York, the next would match that by claiming a brother there, another bidding two sisters, and so on. The gaitered Jew dispersed them; we passed the hooded riders eddying in and out of the kasern grounds, and then in the dusk of the open road, quite alone at last, suddenly met three beings who made us stop in our tracks and murmur:

"Their troops from Turkestan. The Turkomen!"

True enough, though they were afoot, these beings that we had most wanted to encounter. Shorter, withal shaggier than the Cossacks though seeming dressed like them, their swarthier, pure Tartar faces most resembled the Buriats one sees in Manchuria. They had a wide golden stripe on each shoulder, and in their slant-eyes, moustaches like idols of Buddha, were oriental as Chinamen. They vanished toward Sadagura, only glancing at us like any men strayed from their command — men of a race warring here in the Occident for the first time since the days of Genghis Khan.

For an hour the road mounted along the hills; every peasant's house was lightless, and the artillery wheel-tracks hard to follow. Any moment in the darkness, we might be hailed, halted, and

not answering in proper Russian, get a shot. Finally at a burned and deserted shack, where a cowskin knapsack lay in the snow, the road forked. A peasant in white skins coming down the hillside fields directed us in Russian to the right for Boian. As we turned, a two-horse carriage came up from its direction; but the driver, when we tried to hire him, only lashed up his horses and disappeared. The road now veered straight across the open river flats, gleaming pallidly in their white cover. We were getting footsore; from time to time out there, appeared some galloping Cossack, always scorning the highway for the bare swamp or corn-fields, flitting like a ghostly shadow.

At last the rattle of wheels, a loud, demanding voice broke out far behind. "Some one raising h—l with that carriage," I said. The voice kept up a long time, and, ceasing, it was longer before the sound of wheels behind approached. Suddenly close, I recognised hoarse Russian words. No matter, we might get a lift. It was an instant when one should think before acting, but only realises that afterwards. Dimly in the gloaming I saw a one-horse peasant's cart with in-sloping sides of willow withes, and leaped into the middle of the road, raising an arm, hallooing. That very boldness, probably, won us safety. The cart halted, the voices stopped abruptly, and, after a short, dead silence, came the unmistakable click-

ing sound of bayonets being clapped upon rifle muzzles.

"Kto-to idyot?" (Who goes there?)

"Amerikanski!" I called, trying to laugh and say in Russian that we wanted to ride. "Amerikanski!" chimed in Curtin, as we saw three round, brown caps of Russian infantry emerge from the sacks heaped in the wagon, and behind the steel points in our faces. We ducked under them to seize the edge of the cart, which evidently was the last outlandish act for spies or an enemy; so that, as we followed it up by leaping on the sacks, the amazed men laid down their guns, made room for us, and the hooded driver, whom I had taken for a native, lashed up his horse.

We had had the blind nerve to hold up a patrol party, scouring the country for stragglers, spies, or Austrian scouts. A husky, square-faced sergeant, with a rough, bullying manner that we quickly saw meant nothing, was in charge of it. He demanded our papers, and when we produced our passports signified that it was too dark to read, though, from the way he handled them, reading was beyond him. He demanded cigarettes, which we gave them all, and they took with a growing respect; and before long he ordered a ruble from each of us before he would put us down in Boian.

"Are you armed?" he exclaimed suddenly, feeling my clothes.

"No," I said, and managed to enquire whether he imagined that we intended to attack him. He gestured into the misty gloaming as to say that we might have to defend ourselves.

For near two hours of the vividest war-play I have experienced we rode with that patrol. Always Cossacks, galloping like mad through the darkness, could be seen in the pointed hoods drawn over their heads against the night cold, haunting the river-flats like headless horsemen. It was the war business of romance, of story-books, as remote from the petrol, rocket-light horrors of the West as our old Indian fighting. Whatever rider approached near enough to hail, our friends would rise on their knees, fit on bayonets, click shells into their rifle magazines, and the rough sergeant shout his "Kto-to idyot?" Then he received some thin articulation out of the faint snow-phosphorescence of the valley, and all would sink back relieved, disassembling their weapons, to continue their minor song that carried you to the plains of the Ukraine, which the apparition had interrupted.

And I, to be with them, cudgeled my brains for a Tsigane tune —

"Vesna pridyot,
Maneet, rubeet!"

that I remembered hearing in Siberia; and they joined in, chuckling at my mistakes.

Once they jumped up to stare so, challenging a man afoot. The sergeant sprang to the ground and brought back a foot-soldier, holding him by a wrist as though arrested, and prodding him into the cart with us. He had neither rifle nor knapsack, but a pack of some sort bulging under the front of his coat. He was a fattish, beardless young fellow with a hang-dog look. Our friend in an angry mutter tore his bundle from him. It was oblong and heavy, a machine-gun cartridge box, I thought. Was he stealing it — a deserter — or merely back-trailing to find his rifle? It was beyond my Russian to inquire, and rather useless, for suddenly the poor youngster began to sob. Thereafter his captors ignored him, and he refused the cigarettes we offered.

At last dwellings appeared, and occasionally the crowded carts of refugees, flying even by night. We stopped to question and investigate each, our hosts leaping out with fixed bayonets, and their gruff voices mingled with plaintive tales from the vague forms looming upon their household gods — heads of women, chiefly, by the white cotton hoods. Even two little boys dragging sleds had their loads prodded.

Suddenly ahead a shouting and lashing of whips drew us into a great block of supply wagons, driven by peasants, which our sergeant skilfully

blustered his way through to the ceaseless "*Brur-r-r, brur-r-r!*" of the carters at their tangled horses and shafts. The road plunged down hill, flecked by lights on both sides — Boian.

Again the men started talking of rubles, and for the first and only time I was proud of the bank in my boots. I gave the sergeant the one ruble I had exchanged with the proprietor of the Schwartzen Adler in Czernowitz (he had had a bursting wallet of them, which he called useless), and Curtin appeased him with three Austrian crowns. He stopped at a bridge and ordered us out, dismissing at the same time, out of pity I hoped, our tearful companion, who instantly plunged away into the darkness, leaving us alone, interlopers in the heart of the Russian force that for three months had held Bukowina.

"That fire," I whispered, "we saw behind the house a ways back. If we can make that, all right —" Ignorant of passwords, we knew our danger well enough, which always increases the closer you get to headquarters.

We hit for the fire. In the rear yard by a stable, three muffled troopers squatted over it, cooking. They did not see us till we were well within the light, with our arms raised, shouting "Amerikanski!"— a good enough countersign by the way it seemed to puzzle them. They merely lifted

their heads and blinked, until out of the stable loomed an alert young soldier, who, almost as if expecting us, and understanding my request to be taken to the General Staff, led us up the road and into a long, low house by the rear and kitchen. Here, while he disappeared into a front room, we waited interminably. The place was jammed, with staring officers' servants, gaping peasant women holding dish towels, and a couple of soup cauldrons on the square mud stove; one filled with steaming chicken, mind, set a desperate edge to our hunger. Returning, he slipped quickly outside with a reassuring nod, actually refusing the coin we held out. And then the inner door opened, and we faced an officer with the stars of a major.

"You speak French?" he said in that language, scrutinising us; and we responded likewise, as joyfully as if he had hailed us in New Yorkese.

Yet thawing him was one of the longest, hardest jobs I ever tackled. He was a tall, sallow person, with a cold eye, and the neat black beard of a language professor. We placated him with our passports, with the story of our stay in Czernowitz and how we had crossed the lines, giving all a sympathetic pro-Russian slant. Never was my affability and my French so strained; we hinted of our wide wandering, the multifarious points at which we had touched the war, all with the backthought, "Well, he must see we're Americans and

not spies by now"; I even referred to the Kamchatkan visés got in my last year's trip there, and lauded the hunting in Siberia.

"But you are journalists —?" he hesitated, quite unimpressed.

"Yes," we answered. "But that does not keep us from needing a place to sleep and something to eat."

"Well," said he. "There is the village here."

"But if we flounder about in the dark to get a lodging," I said, "we may get shot."

"Oh, certainly. It is very likely," he agreed. "But one moment —" and he vanished inside.

Curtin had just time to exult, "I think we've got him," when the door opened again, this time to admit a younger staff officer, with black hair plastered on a big forehead, merry brown eyes, and a small mouth.

We went over the same rigmarole with him to prove our decency and distinction. What finally won him, I think, was a chance remark I made that in Bucharest I had seen some loathsome photographs of Austrians' atrocities committed upon Servian babes and women.

He murmured something, and also disappeared. In a moment the door admitted us into the front room, crowded with cots and kits, where an orderly was setting us a table. Next, we were sitting down to macaroni soup and *chai* (tea) in

tumblers, with sugar and even lemon! A huge corporal was snoring on a horsehair sofa, and through another door we could hear the whole staff at their mess.

Afterwards the Lieutenant of the plastered hair returned to sit with us, to entertain rather than to pry, as would have happened in any other army. In civilian life he was a lumber trader at Archangel, Belaxev, by name, who loved the woods and fishing, and threw English pipe tobacco — that we would have traded our souls for — on the table for us to smoke.

We asked him about the hundred hostages whom, we had been told in Czernowitz, his army had taken away from the city; and his reply was typical; it bared the whole confusing spirit of partisan falsities you hear everywhere in the world-war.

"Why, they were refugees who insisted on coming with us, because they were afraid of the Austrians," he laughed. "You should have seen them — little girls riding out a-straddle on our guns."

"They say," we told him, "that the Austrians have taken 20,000 of your men prisoners, and any number of guns."

That appeared to be the crowning jest.

"We never have had more than 10,000 men in all Bukowina," grinned Belaxev. "Two regi-

ments of infantry, one of Cossacks, one artillery battery. And our only good infantry regiment we sent to Servia long ago. It helped to smash that fellow, Poiterek. We've held the whole country with about 5,000 reserves, 15 guns, and 600 picked horsemen."

And then we gossiped till we yawned, of hunting in the northern woods, that we all three loved. Like most soldiers met in the war, and ourselves, he could speak only of the small segment of it within his experience. His confidence flashed into an ironic scorn only when we told him how the Germans expected the Russian armies to quit in the spring. Tea by the gallon we had drunk at midnight, and made a deep hole in his box of a thousand long Russian cigarettes.

"By the way," he said finally, "how *did* you get across the Pruth from Czernowitz?"

"On your pontoon bridge," we declared.

"What!" he exclaimed. "It wasn't burned? Troops could cross on it? Whee-ew!"

We nodded. "The river had put it out."

With a long, low whistle, he sprang to his feet, and plunged into the messroom. Curtin and I exchanged stares.

"Spies, practically," he chuckled. "That's what we are. God help us from the Austrians now."

"Not a bit," I winked. "We're only solid

where we wanted to be. It's not our fault if that Cossack by the bridge wasn't up to his job."

We turned in, I on the floor in my sleeping-bag, Curtin on a sofa under a lithograph of the Pope receiving cardinals, for this was a Roman priest's house. The banknotes in my boots revealed a tragedy only less than my shame in having put them there. The long tramp and some vile black dye in their German soles had turned that money — English, Austrian, Rumanian — into soggy cardboard, which may strand us yet. As we dozed by the light of a long candle, first the bearded major came in looking for a dispatch bag, then various subalterns in blouses to turn in on the cots, muttering "Amerikanski" as they pointed at us. And all night old Snoreovitch in the corner kept up his hullabaloo.

IV

HOLDING UP A "BANDIT"

In the small hours Curtin started up with a "Hark!" The sound of heavy creaking wheels was unmistakable, artillery toiling westward again, toward Czernowitz. We kept our mouths shut till breakfast — tea and chicken croquettes — while the youngsters were turning out and playing with the little brown dog they called Bukowinski. Outside through the crowded kitchen a big brass samovar was steaming on the stoop; and at last Belaxev joined us.

"We are going back to-day," he informed, guardedly. "The enemy crossed the Pruth by the pontoons yesterday just after you did."

"A fight?" We thrilled with eagerness. At last — after chasing battle through blizzard and rain, like hoboes. Our Aladdin relief office between the lines seemed stale already.

Belaxev nodded, puckering his small mouth.

"We've got to see it," I declared. "Can't we go back along the upper road, toward Mahala?"

"The lower road will be closed by the firing across it," he answered. "And don't you know

that journalists are not allowed with Russian armies?"

"Is that true? We haven't heard —" we said with a fine air of incredulity.

The Lieutenant turned away, and right there the matter dropped for good. It was as typical of Russian tolerance as of military men in general before this war. We had been told our status; we were trusted, and thereafter, except for the terrible Shechin, ignored. They could not ask us into their mess, but they had the decent sympathy not to arrest or remove us. We took the right cue to efface our presence as far as possible; for they could give no order to patrols not to challenge us, with the result, as you will see, that we became somewhat of a joke.

Rime sparkled on the priest's tiny window. From his yard there spread out full in the dazzling glare of a winter-white world the invaders of Bukowina. For the fourth time before me — with the British at St. Quentin, the Austrians near Przemysl, the Bavarians by Ypres — here were fighters on tip-toe. And the contrast, the heightened colour! Across the road, on a pounded white space edged by peasant hovels, all was infantry, arms stacked in circles, steaming soup kitchens, bearded fellows in long brown coats and English-like caps still asleep on the snow. The road, a jam of shaggy horsemen born to the sad-

dle, of hay-stuffed Red Cross wagons, grain-bags on the groaning gun-carriages, all in the great set of life eastward, back to battle. Foremost always the Cossacks, whether skimming head-down with their lances over the brilliant wastes by the Pruth, or close at hand in their shakos, white, black, the hues of all furs — each embroidered on top with cross-strips of scarlet, blue, green — and in their midst a mounted field-priest, with his long yellow robes, and hood thrown back, dangling a golden tassel.

They passed. Long-booted officers, brown and dun-clad for the most part, but with puzzling shoulder-marks, filled the road, chatting, waving maps, joking. One, with the crown of his sugar-loaf, sable-skin cap filled with cigarettes, was a mark for stealthy thefts of them by his comrades. A little yellow cart drawn by two ponies drove up and deposited a load of them, which, headed by a small grey man in striking regimentals, went into conference in our priest's house. A private, with creepers on his feet, climbed a telegraph pole and cut the wires, except one leading there.

The infantry took the march, filing four deep from the plain of their camp, company after company, breaking here into some sad chant, there with a man playing a mouth-organ, and leading a lively chorus that set the group of officers laughing. But these troops alone did not seem up to

scratch; their bearded moujik faces were vacant and stupid, few looking under forty years of age, as they shuffled on like sheep, pitifully out of step, bowed under heavy knapsacks, with long felt boots lashed to them, and the little spades for intrenching dangling at the skirts of their chocolate coats. Yet all was livened by a boy of twelve or so — the spirited little mascots that Russia allows in her ranks — running alongside with shouldered rifle and a stern, precocious manner of responsibility.

Then, with the road free, came the obverse of the military picture: the peasants flying from their homes, the real sufferers-to-be, headed in the opposite direction. The women, like Eskimos, in their long sheep-coats, high boots, and best skirts — for of the last all wore the same, of violet cloth, with a deep red stripe. Some carried babies, some bundles on sticks. The kids pushed the carts, loaded with sheet-wrapped humps of penates, the gaunt-faced husbands trudging, awfully stricken in spirit, holding the reins alongside. And some mothers, a little girl or two — believe it or not, as you will — trod blue, bare feet into that February snow.

Appeared another yellow cart, from which leaped a man in scarlet riding-breeches, who made straight for us. His lithe and jaunty air of authority, queer uniform, and a big mink-skin cap

over extraordinary features, at once marked his importance.

"Done for," muttered Curtin. "We're ousted now. He's the boss."

He had no beard, but his cropped, reddish moustache, instead of ending on his lips, continued in an up-curve to the lobes of his ears. His slant brown eyes challenged, yet at the same time twinkled. At the moment we did not know it, but this was Shechin himself, Captain of Hussars, "notorious bandit of the first rank," whom we had read of in Austria, whose picked horsemen had "terrorised all Bukowina."

"When you crossed that bridge yesterday," he plunged in, in French, "what was its condition?"

We gasped. We told him, stammering. Expecting to get our walking-papers, the bristling chief, bluffly, without mincing matters, taking us on faith from the rumours about us that of course had spread through the army, actually was putting himself under our obligation.

"But horses — artillery — couldn't traverse it, eh?" he asked. "Show me," and he drew out pencil and paper.

Rapidly he sketched the pontoons' condition from our description, with alert exclamations of, "Ah — ah! I thought so. It is bad — unfortunate. But you are sure the road bridge was impassable?"

"Yes," we chimed; and he was off into the headquarters, thanking us with elaborate politeness over his shoulder.

"Got the 'pep,' all right," exclaimed Curtin. "Another friend, and we thought —"

"D—n it!" I kicked. "We ought to have held him up for a pass."

But we dared not interrupt the strategy meeting in the house. For an hour or more we sat on the priest's fence, watching, waiting for the situation to develop. Once we climbed the hill on the upper road, to be promptly challenged and arrested behind a corn-stack by three privates, who led us back to the house, where one of the subalterns in a blouse, who was on the back stoop, grinned and dismissed them, crestfallen. Hats off to the alertness of those Russian patrols. No officer ever even looked askance at us while we were there, or needed to with such men on the job, who corralled you wherever you ventured. More infantry filed up the road, and no mile of the white blazing flats by the river was ever vacant of moving horsemen. A horse, stalled in the second story of the post office next door, poked his head out of a window. We resolved to wait — we had to — until the staff should leave their house, and then try to sneak after them.

In the meantime I went foraging about the infantry camp across the road, and to stake out a

lodging. In one house I bought a loaf of black bread — wholly baked bran, but we could have eaten straw soon — and in the home of an old German, named Max, whose walls were decorated with water-colours of his own painting, engaged a couple of benches to sleep the night on. Then, about one o'clock, while we were climbing the rise just back of headquarters, distinctly from the distant river I heard sharp, vagrant detonations, as of hammer-blows upon wood.

"Rifle-firing! It's beginning."

Curtin at first was incredulous, but soon the officers from the house crowded out into the yard below, and, field-glasses at their eyes, began searching the hills that rose sharply across the Pruth. Thus for a long time. The distant *pock-pock* of bullets ceased, began again increasingly. In a while the whole staff mounted horses tethered under a shed, and galloped away up the road. We could stand it no longer, and followed on the run.

This time we got some hundred yards further, before two sentries swooped across the snow and gathered us in. Heart-breaking, since over the next hill the boom and wool-white puffs of shrapnel already were breaking.

But it was then, on the return under arrest, that I did what so dumbfounded Curtin, and I should not have dared had I had time to think. For as we sulked down the hill before two bayonets, the

sight of red knees astride a big bay, the mink shako and continuous red moustache of our Hussar, hit me with the obsession: "It's our one chance to see anything, to get anywhere." I never considered what it might mean to fling myself in front of Russian cavalry riding to action, to jump out into the middle of the road and hold up a "notorious bandit" on his warpath, with the demand that he write me a pass to watch him fight. Yet exactly that I found myself doing.

The trotting, shaggy company behind reined in, bunching tight together. And Shechin sprang from his bay with the greeting —

"Ah! mon ami. Mais, certainement!"

Curtin and I could have fallen flat at the sight of a feather. The two sentries opened their mouths, and ducked. We had whipped out our passports and the "bandit" was scribbling on them with his fountain pen: "Permit to appear on the road. Captain Shechin."

"A good place here. We will take our position," he then said, looking around, and repeating the comment in Russian, as an order, to his bodyguard.

"Stay here with me," he turned to us, with a sudden, fiery enthusiasm. "You may see some fighting. The Austrians will be trying to cross the river."

V

WINTER FIGHT AND PHILOSOPHY

For the rest, our part in the Russian retreat from Bukowina centred in that afternoon with this astounding leader.

There was a half-finished house of mud and wattle at the roadside, and by it Captain Shechin and his crew of some score husky fellows hitched their horses and took up a position. He himself, much as you might draw a beer bottle from under your coat, produced a machine gun — captured from the Austrians, which he was as proud of and eager as a boy with a new pistol to use — from the back of a horse's saddle, and set it up here with his own hands.

Always livelier, coming now in streaming volleys, grew the woodeny *tuck-tuck-tuck* of firing down on the river-flats. But up to now no troops had been visible; not, indeed, till Shechin pointed them out to us, a long line of dots against the glaring snow, rising black from seas of reddish willows, did we see his regiment of 600 men strung out below.

"Look there at my boys," he said proudly. "It is admirable, magnificent. They stand!

And I have three youngsters, lieutenants, who are even further forward than we see, facing the Austrian fire from those houses and the woods across the Pruth."

Stirring was a mild word for this fellow's honest pride in his men's valour. And the snow-bronzed, shaggy bodyguard about him, in their outlandish and many-coloured rigs, echoed it with catlike grins, as they rolled cigarettes, or from their pockets produced chunks of raw bacon and began to munch on them. A leader's homage to his ranks, and their silent, bashful reciprocation — never before had so vivid a sense of the grim yet humanising solidarity of fighters gripped me.

"They are mounted down there?" I asked, most irreverently it soon seemed. "Not shooting from behind their horses?"

One look from him withered. "This is not," he said, "— a circus!"

Curtin and I backed off into the hut. For the four hours that we watched this skirmish, so typical of the Bukowina campaign, we tried to efface ourselves, not to annoy him. But Shechin would not let us out of his sight; he kept calling us back — once to be photographed, grouped with his six-foot "garçons" about the machine gun — to point out new moves in the battle, or confide some phase of his errant philosophy.

A first requisite in being a notorious bandit, ap-

parently (Vienna papers please copy), is to speak the most exquisite French; next, you must sincerely mourn the destruction by Austrians of Louis Quinze furniture and Fragonard tapestries in the various Austrian castles where chance quarters you.

"The great existence," he would say. "One night you sleep on the floor of a peasant hovel, eating black bread. The next, you are between linen in a château, after a supper of champagne."

I was showing him my map of Bukowina, and he was tracing his course through it, indicating the points at which he had blown up fourteen bridges in the retreat.

"We camped once in the snow on that mountain-top, two thousand metres up," his finger paused on the sheet. "But without hardship, life would all be stale enough."

And always his glasses were at his eyes, either fixed on the unwavering, comb-like line of his men on the shining fields along the river, or searching the abrupt hills on the Austrian side, in the blinding winter glare.

"See them, see them!" he would cry, pressing the binoculars on us. "The Uhlans crossing that field —" and we could discern, pricked out in a black spidery train upon the snow, the enemy's horsemen slanting down into the valley; or upon the very road that we had followed yesterday, the

bobbing heads of infantry dipping into the hollow by the village of Ostritza.

The whole action was, of course, to keep them from fording the Pruth. Should they force it, the artillery and infantry that had moved back toward Sadagura would be cut off. As for positions, the Austrians held the advantage. Their side of the river had good cover; they were firing from the houses of the Bukowina town of Mamornitza, adjoining the Rumanian one from which we had crossed the frontier. The whole Russian force was utterly in the open of the flats.

New infantry, continually marching from the east, supported it. Snake-like line after line passed through Boian below, across the camping-ground, and, reaching the flats, deployed into open formation, advancing in a long wavering line, firing, around an old hay-shed, and joining the immobile line of mounted men. Two companies stationed themselves along the road just under us, the men squatting in the snow on its right side some six feet from one another. Sight of them stirred no enthusiasm in our friend.

"Reserves," he pointed scornfully. "Efficiency — zero."

But always Shechin kept reverting in talk to his own men, to his scouts and outposts galloping like steeple-chasers across the dazzling scene of this winter action. Picked men, he told us, twenty

taken from this regiment, twenty from that, as he had requested the General of the Tenth Army. A side issue, the Bukowina campaign; few men could be spared, so the cavalry who bore the burden of it had to be the best.

"They have been hard upon the Jews," he said. "But what else can you expect? They relieve them of their — er — lighter possessions when I am not around. But they are not brutes, ever. Killed none that I know of, and never bother with the women. I let them get their perquisites. If I didn't, we might not have any Cossacks, you see —" he winked.

Certainly every one present in his body-guard had a pair of binoculars strung around the neck, and the moment before he had been complaining how the war had caught the whole Russian army short of them. And some of the glasses did look suspiciously fragile, as if they had been intended more for the foot-lights than for advancing Uhlans.

"You know there is a bridge across the Pruth at Ostritza," I said, remembering what the toothless hack-driver in Czernowitz had told us. We were already deep-dyed informers.

"Unfortunately, yes," he said. "And more unfortunately, the river is frozen enough for infantry to cross at many points. But let them, only let them!"

He gave the handle of the machine-gun an eager, anticipatory twirl, and the muscles back of his jaw crept and puckered the bronze under his queer moustache. To us it was strangest that for all the racket of firing from the spread lines of infantry, from the Hussars, not a wisp of smoke showed against the glare of snow.

"Any Germans, do you think," I asked, "across the river there?"

"Germans!" he exclaimed — Bukowina had been reported full of them. "In the three months that we have been here I have not seen one."

And we drifted on to talk of the Turkestan troops. "We let them do nothing. We don't trust them. They are worthless beside white men, as are any aboriginal troops."

From time to time the little yellow cart of the General Staff would mount the hill, and the black-bearded major who had first received us at headquarters came to see how the fight was progressing. We chuckled as he, seeing how chummy we were with Shechin, instantly lost his frigid manner. The latter seemed to pick these moments to thrust us forward.

"Look at those girls there," he seized me by the arm, pointing to two, better dressed than peasants, who were mounting the hill handbags in hand from the very ranks of infantry. "That is

the amazing thing of war. It is not the soldier who has no nerves, no fear, but the harmless creatures of an afflicted country, and particularly the women."

It was now five o'clock, without change in the positions, or pause in the continual firing. Still, by studying the white southern hills, now bathed in a dazzling glamour under the sinking sun, you could discern the descending black threads of horsemen or infantry. Still, at intervals, some moving speck from the plain would mount toward us, and, becoming a furious horseman, scorning road and rise, dash up through the corn-stubble, salute, and thrust a message at his captain. And Shechin, reading it, would draw out his pad with carbon-paper between the leaves, scribble an answer, toss it to another waiting henchman, who flung upon his horse and galloped down the icy slope without touching a rein.

Circus or no, it was more Buffalo Bill than war; no motor-scouts, no aeroplanes; the yellow wagon in place of a motor-car; instead of some lofty tactician with elegant entourage — our alert and garrulous friend, refined in the keenness of his mind, yet loving danger and action for their own sakes; loving his roving job and his loyal retainers.

We built a fire on the floor of the unfinished mudhouse, against which leaned a rank of lances with their three-bladed points. Curtin and I in-

side began to feel ourselves part of the furry bodyguard; they lent us cigarette "makes," pressed bread on us, winked behind Shechin's back in bantering endorsement of all his tiptoe eagerness. Terrible Cossacks of story, these? Oh, very well. Then as "terrible" are our own soldiers or marines; for in warmth and friendliness, in quick response to our fellowship, they differed not the least from any enlisted men.

Youngsters the world over, whether from the farms of Kansas or the plains of the Don, clad in sheepskins or contract khaki from Philadelphia, will be brothers in the free, stern leash of war. So when one, with a turn-up nose and a whole white astrakhan dogskin coiled on his crown, started a spat with his blue-eyed pal in a black ditto, there followed exactly the same playful rough-house — you could even guess what the spitting Russian cusses were — as if you were in a Texas barrack-room instead of on the firing-line in Bukowina.

In the middle of it, Shechin bounded into the house, exclaiming:

"Artillery! I must have artillery. I could inflict severe losses upon those companies descending the hills."

He squatted by the fire, scribbled his dispatch, and with a tactful, amused glance ended the scrap by entrusting it to him with the white shako, who

jumped on his horse and galloped away, like any stage courier.

But no artillery appeared. Darkness, instead, made first intermittent, finally petered out the rumpus all along the pallid Pruth. We helped fold up the machine-gun, and all descended into Boian, Curtin and I to hunt Max the artist, claim our lodging, and rustle supper. But the returning infantry, falling a-doze on the snow among their steaming wheeled kitchens, had brought officers who commandeered our bunks. Seeking others, we were again arrested: a sudden "Koodahidite?" from a fellow with a gilt Greek cross on his cap, and it was always easier to mutter "Voennui stab," and point to headquarters than to test the man with Shechin's permit. This time, on the way there, we showed it to an old colonel of reserves, who bowed almost reverently and freed us. But not wanting to bother the General Staff again, we climbed the hill behind their house and quartered ourselves with a pale Russian peasant woman, who cooked us eggs, and in the casual national way remained staring, with her little boy and girl, until we were ready to turn in upon one of the two beds.

A youth of twenty, the little girl's uncle, slept with her in the other; but not until she, kneeling on the quilt and facing the east in the manner of her faith, repeated her prayers, crossing herself

with a pudgy fist, and glancing always from us to the tiny window and all the racket of the army outside.

"To-night's the night," I said, "for the Austrians to cross the river, and work the Washington-on-the-Delaware business. There's ice enough here, too."

"Ye-es," drawled Curtin, likely remembering the number of shop signs in the name of "Perlmutter" that you see all through Hungary. "Only it would go down in history as 'Perlmutter Crossing the Pruth!'"

Hour after hour in the night we listened to the heavy clank of artillery, now toiling eastward again, in retreat — a new phase. Were our friends evacuating Boian, leaving us to the mercy of the Austrians, whom we felt, as they would be, our enemies no less? We kept jumping up to look through the window, standing by to follow the minute that headquarters emptied itself and took the road. And it was ominously lighted all night, the while Cossack messengers dashed in and out of the yard.

But dawn, as I made the fire in the stove, found the staff still there, and promptly at seven o'clock the woodpecker sounds of rifle fire along the river broke out again. The pale woman, coming in to make us tea while the little girl and her heavy-faced uncle still snoozed, told us that seven of our

men — what else by now? — had been wounded in yesterday's action, and "hundreds of Austrians," of course, killed.

"Then I guess no one will be crossing the river," said Curtin, as we rolled up our blanket to depart, and tried to press money on our hostess, which she refused to take. "We won't have to rescue the pictures in old Max's Louvre, eh, and bury them?"

Outside, the day was changed cold and grey, the firing occasional, but often in volleys as if from machine guns. Still pricked out in their long line through the red willows, stood Shechin's "admirable" boys, never having budged all night; and that afternoon when despairing of any further fighting we hit for this town in Russia proper, they hung on there, rounding out a full twenty-four hours at their inexorable duty.

We started to hunt up our bandit of the scarlet breeches. An orderly at the gate of the staff yard said that he was in the railway station. Just then an armoured train went kiting across the flats towards Sadagura. But at the station were nothing but infantry, who promptly arrested us again. Shechin's scribble again released, and we wandered up through alleys fenced with tight willow thatches to the high-road, there to wait interminably for a battle to develop, and watch the refugees.

The yellow carts hitched outside tiny shacks

showed, too, that the staff were edging towards the Russian border. Women with sheeted bundles on their heads, panting and groaning under the weight, streamed thither. One sledge, drawn by a man with a baby in his arms, held three babies less than four years old, and two little boys manfully pushed the runners over the frozen ruts. There was no mother. But of the many women that passed thus, the few that were not barefoot, evicted by fear from their homes in this Russian midwinter, had their feet thrust stockingless into enormous, low-cut shoes.

We warmed ourselves in one hovel at a whitewashed mud stove. A Rumanian woman in a blue coral necklace was slicing potatoes, tossing them on it to broil — all there had been to eat for days — turn in turn for a freckled Russian boy, who gave me vile pipe tobacco, and two of her own youngsters. One of them not ten years old was smoking, too, and when I reproached him his mother shrugged her shoulders with a hopeless smile, in the manner of any parent powerless before revolt in the rising generation.

We gave up finding Shechin. No one seemed to know where he was or the artillery had gone. Outside in the road continued the endless marching and counter-marching of Cossacks, to-day in tight hoods with long muffler ends; of infantry, supply wagons. Priests, with yellow robes and

golden tassels; and regularly every half-hour a whole company of Turkomen pranced up the road looking for a fray, only to be ordered back toward Novo Sliatsa.

These fellows, on horseback unlike the few we had seen, wore long gowns heavily wadded and of a deep carmine, curved swords in sheaths studded with silver nails, knives with finely inlaid handles. In some strange way it was ominous, epochal, to watch them, aborigines from the wild Altai valleys, flat-faced, slit-eyed, with fierce black moustaches and skin more black than yellow, proudly passing in their gold and scarlet trappings the shivering, white-faced natives of the Occident; mounted Buddhas, flanked by mean stucco and thatch huts, under whose eaves, framed behind glass, gleamed so faintly ikons of our own Christian faith.

One of the twelve-year-old mascots with the army held us up for our papers. We laughed at him, and never had I seen dark eyes flash so angrily, or a hand so grip a sabre, as he trudged up the road with his rifle, looking back and swearing at us over his little shoulder.

We climbed a hill to a long dwelling with glassed-in verandas, where troops swarmed and cattle were being slaughtered, only to be arrested again and taken into a corncrib. Two artillery officers asleep on some hay, rubbed their eyes,

yawned, and grinned at Schechin's signature, promptly to fall asleep again. Our captors led us down the hill to a hut where one of the yellow carts was hitched, and where the subaltern with the blouse who knew us stood. He went in with the news of our fifth arrest, at least, and instantly there went up a roar of laughter from the whole staff in the house.

Belaxev, our Lieutenant friend from Archangel, came out. The firing along the Pruth was relaxing. There probably would be no more fighting for days, he said; and added, rather bitterly:

"As it now appears, we never needed to have evacuated Czernowitz at all."

Curtin and I grasped his hand, and started afoot for this town in Russia proper, just across the Bukowina border. The whole raiding Russian force was strung for miles along the road, and, being headed away from its operations, we were no more arrested. Only, with our long coats, we undoubtedly were suspected of being Jews, for no less than three bearded patriots of Holy Russia stepped out of the ranks and demanded our religious persuasion.

"Angleski," we would answer.

"Tak-tak —" (So) each beamed, rather awed but satisfied. "*Angleski katoliki.*" Some day I am going to ask an Anglican bishop why it should make such a hit with a Russian moujik to claim the Church of England.

Every farmyard on both sides of the road was alive with singing, eating troops, their steaming kitchens, stacked arms. Dozens slept on the hay spilled from artillery caissons. Here and there lay a dead horse. Once I saluted a handsome captain riding with an orderly behind him on a huge dapple grey.

"Who are you?" he asked in Russian, reining in with a stare.

"We are Americans," I answered in French.

"Ah," he beamed, noting my accent. "You speak English."

He reached down and we shook hands, chatting in English. He offered us cigarettes. "From the way you saluted," he said apologetically, riding on, "I thought you were a German officer." And we all three laughed.

We met a Red Cross orderly and a civilian climbing into a seedy barouche. The latter, a sharp-featured tradesman who had been in America, was supplying the army with cooking-utensils, and we rode with them the remaining seven kilometres to this town. Its Bukowina (Austrian) half was wholly burned and deserted; bullet holes in what windows remained told how the Cossacks had cut loose on their first raid into the enemy's land. But perhaps from their treatment of us, because we had touched something of them beneath their savage, traditional exterior, neither of us had it in our hearts to blame.

No gates blocked the road at the painted, barber-pole boundary posts; not a soul stepped out of the Russian sentry-boxes, and we jogged into Bessarabia without showing a paper, maybe the first aliens ever to have entered thus the Czar's empire proper. But you cannot down the contrast between the Russian and the Austrian halves of this place, whatever one's natural sympathies now at the close of our adventure. The latter was neat and clean, with graded streets, while here they are filthy seas of mud where black hogs root, and listless, long-coated Jews stand in front of tumble-down shacks dangling little canes.

A meaning in this, surely, in view of the future. The Germanic race at least builds, disciplines. No wonder, in the face of all the paradoxes you meet in this war, only a firmer neutrality is the line of logic.

Everywhere Turkomen floundered through the mud, afoot, mounted, in droshkies. The rooms of this loathsome inn are crowded with them. First thing, as his wife cooked us eggs, mine Hebrew host flung an English sovereign on the table, and wanted me to buy it. We dickered.

Curtin owns it now, sold for 25 Austrian crowns, paid, too, in the damaged money hid from the Cossacks in my boots. It is worth nearly thirty. But, then, Curtin is a Yankee, as I said in the beginning.

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